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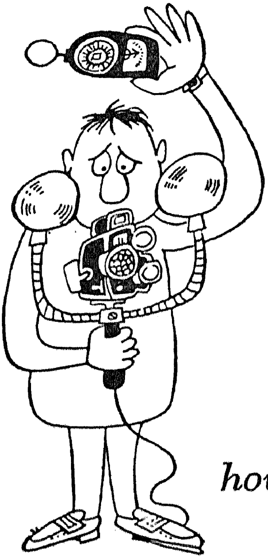
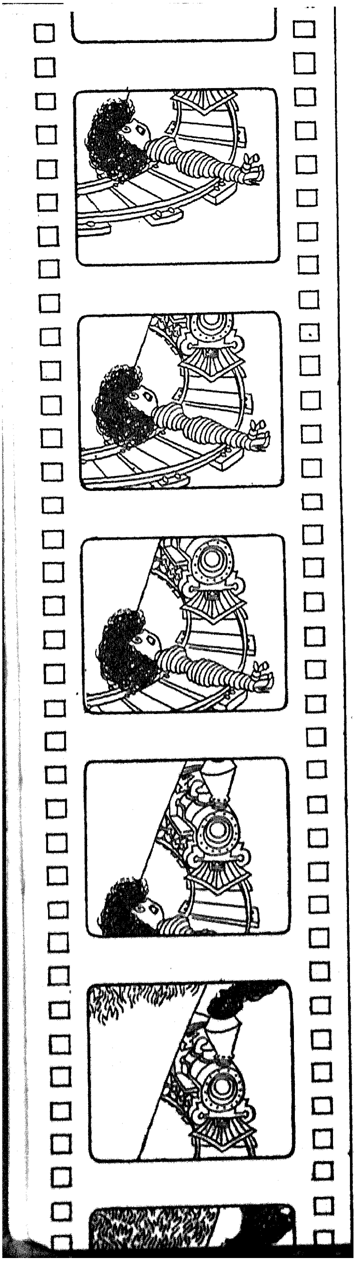
Story-telling home movies



how to make them



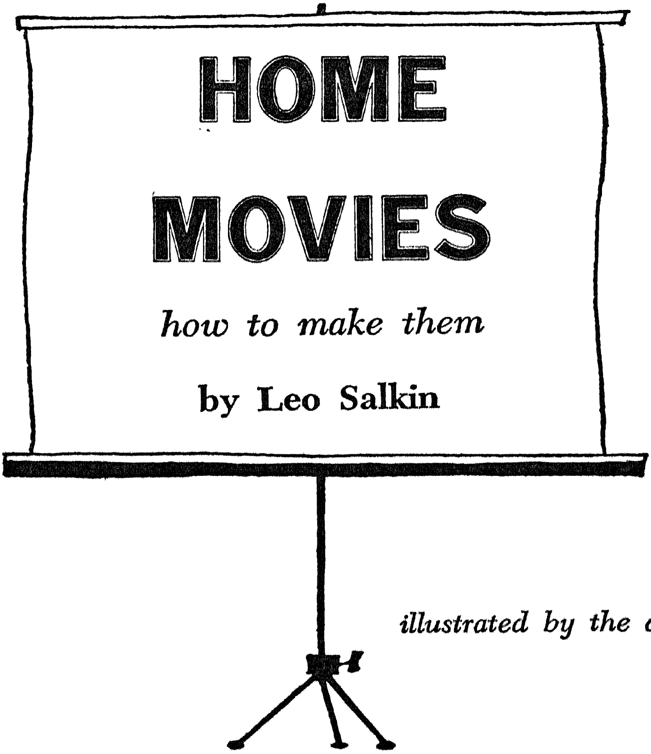
STORY-

McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

TELLING HOME MOVIES

how to make them

by Leo Salkin



illustrated by the author

New York   Toronto   London

To Jeri and Lynn

STORY-TELLING HOME MOVIES

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PREFACE

> *. . . For me the image-making machine has been a means of saying certain things in visual terms instead of saying them with ink on paper.*
>
> —JEAN COCTEAU

Amateur movie making is generally referred to, and approached, as a photographic hobby. The term "movie making" is commonly accepted as being synonymous with photography. This is the root of a great deal of what's wrong with home movies. It's an erroneous conception. The motion picture is a visual narrative form, and although movies are completely dependent on the photographic process (at least, at this time; eventually the recording of graphic images may be done electronically on magnetic tape), one should not approach movie making as one would approach photography—just to take pictures. A movie is not "just pictures," it is a series of *related* pictures arranged in a narrative, or story-telling, sequence. The movie maker should consider himself a story teller who tells his story through the language of moving pictures.

Perhaps it would be wise, before we go any further, to clarify our terms.

Story telling is not synonymous with the written word, nor does it necessarily imply the use of the written word or the written script. We had story tellers before we had the written word, and long before we had books.

There are many forms other than words through which a story may be communicated.

A pantomime is a dumb show; it is a story conveyed exclusively through a kind of restricted movement and gesture.

In dance or choreo-drama, story, mood, emotion, and characterization are revealed through expressive movement and music.

A story can be told in painting or in drawing. Sometimes the drawings themselves actually represent words, as witness the Egyptian hieroglyphics and other pictograph forms of communication. A similar form still in use today is the contemporary cartoon.

Many silent movies were able to convey their stories almost exclusively through the use of camera and pantomime supplemented by a few expedient subtitles.

An understanding of the fundamentals of story telling will make it possible for you to communicate the interest and excitement of your ideas and feelings through your films. This applies to the amateur with no more photographic or technical knowledge than can be acquired through a couple of readings of the camera instruction manual as well as to the serious amateur and week-end professional whose movies have been technically and photographically excellent but have consistently failed to hold interest for an audience.

Regardless of whether you use a comprehensively written screenplay, an illustrated storyboard, or a simple impulse as the framework for a movie, this initial form must be converted into a series of visual images that result in the pictorial expression of a story.

Leo Salkin

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I am grateful to Daniel Gordon, who read the book in manuscript and offered helpful criticism and suggestions.

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CONTENTS

Preface v

Part I Introduction

1 *Why movies?* 3
2 *Ten steps to better movies* 13

Part II Pre-production: the story

3 *Getting film ideas* 27
4 *The movie maker as story teller* 41
5 *Conflict and audience interest* 57
6 *Humor in your movies* 65
7 *The storyboard technique for developing visual ideas* 85
8 *Developing a picture sense* 103

Part III Production

9 *Directing a movie* 117
10 *The camera as a story-telling instrument* 135
11 *Light and lighting* 153
12 *Film editing and story telling* 171

Part IV Notes on personal movie making

13 *Personal environment as subject matter* 191
14 *Children as film subjects* 207

Appendix I. Story and the animated cartoon 215
Appendix II. Dance films: storytelling in movement 231
Appendix III. Adding sound to films 234

Appendix IV. Select bibliography 238
Appendix V. "Fair and Warmer": a screenplay in shooting-script form 242
Index 253

Part One / Introduction

The quality of an art always depends finally on the quality of the mind directing or producing it. Instead of doubting the artistic possibilities of the film as a medium, we should rather doubt the artistic capabilities of man to rise to the high opportunities of this new medium. It is a new Pandora's Box that the movie man carries about, from which he has already released all kinds of evils, but at the bottom of which hope still remains.

—HERBERT READ

A Symposium of Sixty Years of 16mm Film (1923–1953)

Why movies?

1

I am convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world, excepting only the example of personal conduct; and I waive even this exception in favor of the art of the stage, because it works by exhibiting examples of personal conduct made intelligible and moving to crowds of unobservant unreflecting people to whom real life means nothing.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

TOOLS AND IDEAS

The sheer volume of words that is fired each month at the amateur movie maker is appalling. He is told about the cameras he ought to buy and how he should use them to get that Hollywood touch in his movies, the light meters to buy for perfect exposure, the lenses, tripods, lights, editing devices, projectors, films and all the gadgets imaginable. And all are supposed to contain within them the secret sought by the alchemists—the magic that will turn base mediocrity into golden artistic achievement.

In the mad scramble to sell equipment, advertising tends to overemphasize the importance of the equipment in achieving a successful result, and ignores or minimizes the creative contribution of the individual.

You know the ads—the ones that print a reproduction of a magnificent photograph and, beneath the picture in a boldface caption, proudly proclaim: This Great Prize-winning Photograph Was Made with the New Automatic GoofProof Grafoleikaflex equipped with Syncro Pic-sure!

Or that it was shot with the new Constant Dilemma f/1.5 Lens equipped with a Rapid-runaround Shutter. And so on, through the rest of the routine, the implication being that the machine made the picture. And consequently, according to advertising logic, if you will purchase the same machine, camera, lens, light meter, film or whatever they happen to be selling, you, too, will be able to make pictures like this.

That's nonsense. Admittedly their machine was used, but it was not the machine that made the picture. The machine recorded the image, but the picture was the result of what went on in a man's head.

If you discount the extravagance of the advertising claims and examine the equipment for what it is, you will find most of it well designed, versatile, efficient and almost foolproof. Most of the equipment would do most of the things claimed for it if only someone would discover, invent or supply the one missing accessory, a thinking gimmick: some little something we could see and feel, something with chromium dials we could set, and a spring we could wind, and a button we could push; something with an electronic impulse that would cogitate until a set of chimes quietly announced the creation of a brilliant new thought which it would be pleased to drop into our eager hands.

Let's compare an author and his typewriter with a photographer and his camera. A typewriter is a machine for putting words on paper; a camera is a machine for putting images on film. Neither machine has the ability to comment on anything by itself. Neither machine can select, reject, emphasize, minimize, dramatize or render a judgment of any kind. They are simply the instruments through which author and photographer express themselves. If the author's thinking is dull and prosaic, that's the kind of story that will come out of his typewriter. If the photographer's thinking, as well as his seeing, is unimaginative and commonplace, out of his camera will come a strip of film as tedious as a twice-told tale.

A camera is a tool. Tools are necessary and valuable. You can't play a violin concerto without a violin, but buying a Stradivarius will not automatically enable you to play like Yehudi Menuhin.

The reason so much emphasis is placed on tools and techniques is that these things are tangible. They can be seen and felt. They can be measured, tested and evaluated. You can show a person how to operate a camera and how to thread a projector and how to take an exposure reading and how to mix chemicals and how to make prints. You can appraise print quality: too light, too dark, too flat, too contrasty. But the moment you begin to deal with ideas, with what a film attempts to say, you leave the field of tangible matter and enter the world of abstractions and intangibles. This is a world of feeling and intuition. You can't weigh the worth of an idea. You can't tell if the idea is too dark or too light or if it should have been underexposed and overdeveloped or vice versa. You are now involved in matters of opinion and personality. What you do in this area is the result of what you are, what you think and what you believe. Somewhere around here you get involved with philosophy.

In the final analysis, movie making is a kind of thinking projected visually in time and space; and although it is the photographic process that enables us to put images on film, it is the thinking process that creates an interest in those images. The quality of your finished movie is a projection, not of the quality of your camera, but of the quality of your mind.

TECHNIQUE AND IMAGINATION

A basic technical understanding of the photographic means available to the movie maker is necessary, but beyond that, a creative technique must grow organically out of the need to express an idea. Technique cannot substitute for imagination; it is, rather, the tool used by the imagination to express itself. In other words, when you know what you want to say you'll find a way to say it, and that in essence will become your technique.

Techniques are not nearly so difficult as they are made to appear. A verbal description of any technical process invariably seems much more complicated than the actual process itself. A technique is acquired by doing. And a working familiarity with the tools of your craft is acquired by freely experimenting with them. Actually, most techniques in the creative arts are based on a commonsense understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the essential tools and materials. You can produce work of a high caliber even with a limited technical knowledge.

If you will avoid tricky techniques requiring special equipment and direct your imaginative resources toward getting the most out of what you've got, you'll find yourself deriving greater enjoyment and at the same time producing better movies. If you can't make a good movie with simple equipment, then you are not going to do any better by accumulating a lot of complicated gadgets.

WHY MOVIES?

What are some of the unique qualities of the motion-picture form, and how can they serve the story teller?

In comparing the traditional story teller with the movie maker we find that the language of the traditional story teller is words; the language of the film story teller is pictures. The traditional story teller uses words to create imagery, but the film maker starts with a picture which is in itself imagery.

It takes a highly skilled writer to bring a character to life in the pages of a book, yet a movie maker with the most inadequate knowledge of how to delineate a character in graphic terms can, by the simple act of projecting the image of a person in motion on the screen, make that character, at least in form and substance, appear alive and credible.

The motion picture has the ability to expand or condense time and space. An event that might take hours, days, weeks or years to transpire in real life can be shown on the screen in minutes or seconds. For example, a film record covering ten years of a child's life can be shown in ten minutes. Time-lapse photography as utilized in such films as Walt Disney's *Nature's Half Acre* made it possible for us to see the whole continuous process of seeds taking root and plants coming to fruition in a matter of minutes. Conversely, an event or incident that occurs in a matter of seconds, or even in a fraction of a second, can be expanded for dramatic purposes throughout the length of an entire feature film.

And there's no limit to the space that can be covered: a person takes a trip around the world in half a dozen scenes, or he takes a trip to the moon, or twenty thousand leagues under the sea, or beyond the lost horizon to Shangri-La; and there is always that amazing credibility which is so much a part of the enchanted make-believe reality of the movies.

Editing is another facet of movie making that will present innumerable opportunities for story telling through an imaginative manipulation of the film strips. A high degree of plasticity is achieved in motion pictures through this kind of creative editing, which is not editing in the ordinary sense of cutting out bad takes and splicing a reel of film in chronological order. It is a form of editing in which individual shots without narrative or dramatic value in themselves are assembled into a pattern that creates new dramatic and emotional relationships through a juxtaposition of these formerly unrelated images.

To be more specific: you might have a strip of film of your Uncle Charley laughing—nobody knows what he is laughing at, but he is laughing. Following that, you cut in a shot you have of some monkeys in the zoo and immediately you set up a relationship between two previously unrelated shots: Uncle Charley is now laughing at the monkeys. Or instead of monkeys you might follow Uncle Charley's laughing scene with a shot of Aunt Gwendolyn in her new Easter bonnet—this will create a relationship between Uncle Charley and Aunt Gwendolyn that didn't exist as long as the two scenes were separate and isolated shots. The final result is greater than, or at least different from, the sum total of the individual parts. Not to mention the new relationship between Uncle Charley and Aunt Gwendolyn!

Fairly good movies can be made more easily than good still photographs. For one thing, motion—and this doesn't mean panning and other forms of camera jiggling—covers over a multitude of photographic sins like poor composition, poor lighting and even poor exposure. Another advantage of motion is that in shooting a still photograph of an action, you have to trip your shutter at that decisive moment when all the disparate elements in the composition seem to crystallize into a picture; if you miss, what you get is usually not worth having. In a movie you get a record of the entire flow of movement.

Good results can be attained with simple equipment; you don't need a lot of accessory attachments or a variety of lenses. D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* is still considered one of the masterpieces of motion-picture story telling; it was made in 1914, photographed entirely with a 2-inch lens on a 35mm camera.

Movie making comes close to being an ideal avocational activity: name an interest and you will find a facet of movie making adaptable to it. What else will furnish you with so many outlets for so much unused creative energy?

If your interest is primarily in photography, look at all the cameras, lights, light meters, filters, lenses, films and cinematographic techniques there are to play with.

If you are mechanically inclined you can build things:

titlers, matte boxes, editing devices, camera attachments, camera dollies and cranes, recording equipment, movie sets and projection rooms.

If your interest lies in chemistry, physics or optics consider the revolutionary changes that have been brought about by the experimenters in photography and motion pictures during the last thirty years: sound on film, directional sound, color film, the Polaroid process, three-dimensional movies, the anamorphic lens, and the experimental work being done with sound and image on magnetic tape.

If your interest is in theater arts you can gather a group of interested amateurs and semiprofessionals and form a motion-picture Little Theater Group. Here is an opportunity to become producer, business manager, writer, director, actor, dancer, photographer, set designer, costume designer, film editor, musical director, projectionist, ticket-taker and popcorn salesman.

If your interest is in story telling you have the entire range of human experience and human enterprise to make movies about. Your primary interest may be in films that contain purely personal values, such as a chronicle of a day with the baby, the movie record of a picnic or excursion, a vacation trip, or the planning and building of your home.

If your interest is in your job you can communicate that interest and absorption to others through a story or documentation on film.

If your favorite subject is your hobby, whether it be growing things, collecting things, building things, or bird-watching, it can be the subject of one film or many.

Your interest may be in a journalistic or documentary film which presents visual evidence on a sociological subject of personal or public concern. You may want to make an educational or how-to-do-it film for a school or business, or an inspirational film for a church or religious organization.

You may have a need to make an experimental film done solely for the gratification of your ego or the edification of your id.

Principally it is to the story teller that the motion picture presents its greatest challenge, and it is in story telling that the results can be most rewarding.

Ten steps to better movies

2

Like hungry guests, a sitting audience looks.

—GEORGE FARQUHAR

Most home movies are boring. They are boring not to the people who make them but to the people who have to look at them. At least that's the contention of most cartoonists whose works appear in the large general-circulation magazines and newspapers.

The theme of the cartoons is invariably based on a situation in which a hapless and unsuspecting guest is coerced into looking at home movies against his will, against his better judgment and to his complete discomfort. A cartoon drawn by Wingert and syndicated by King Features is a typical example: the proud host is running his home movies. On the screen is shown that dullest of movie scenes, the entire family standing, not doing a thing, just standing facing the camera. In the foreground of the cartoon the harrassed guest turns to his wife and whispers, "I wish we'd paid to see this, so we could walk out."

I admit this is only gag stuff and where is my sense of humor and all that—but these cartoons would not be funny, that is, they would not strike a responsive chord in the reader, if there was not a large grain of truth in them. Humor is based on truth. And the cartoons are funny, so maybe we'd better take a long hard look at our home movies and see what's wrong.

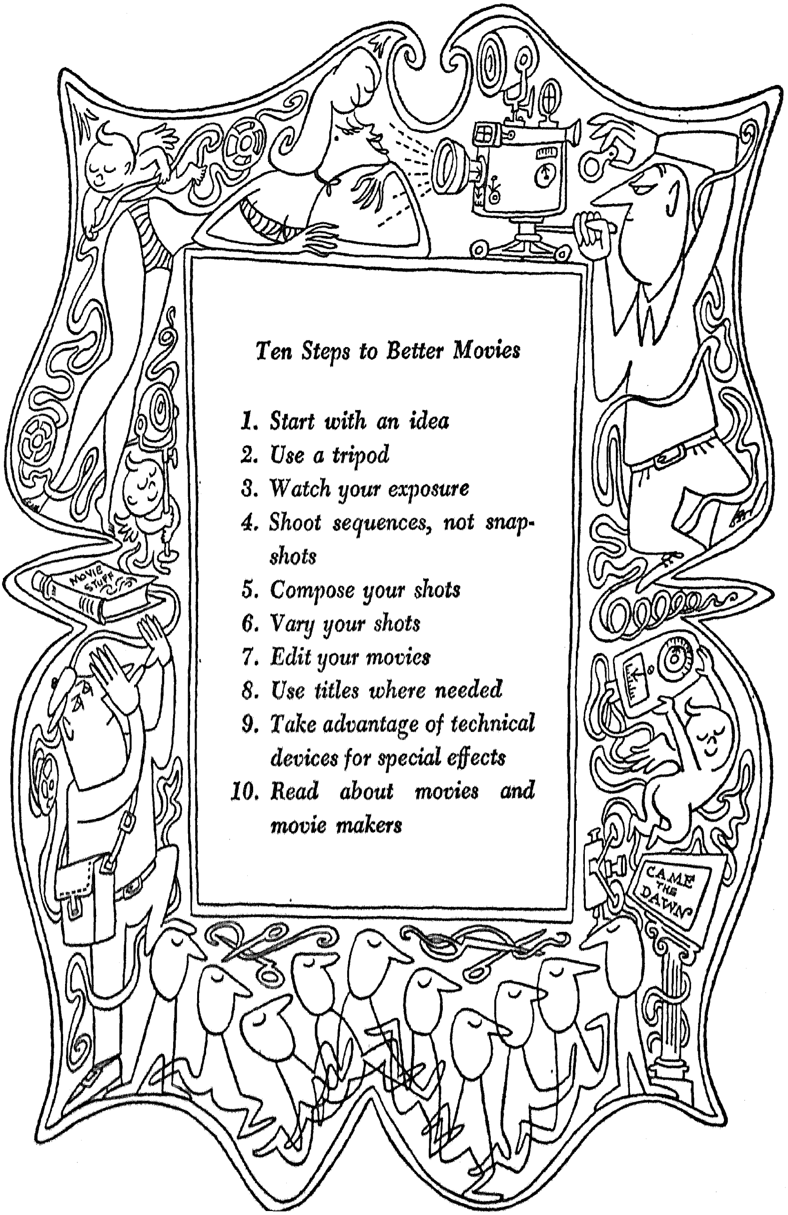
The most harmful misconception the average amateur film maker has to contend with is his naïve belief that the mere fact of physical movement on the screen is enough of a novelty to hold the interest of an audience. This miraculous illusion of real-life movement created by a mechanical-optical phenomenon wowed the patrons of the Kinetoscope, Phonograph, and Graphophone Arcades of 1900, but before the novelty even had a chance to wear thin, George Melies, in the same year, had already discovered the value of dramatization in films.

The same thing happened with television. At first people were fascinated by the magic of the electronic mirror that had elbowed its way into their living rooms. They watched the most atrocious programs, spellbound by the miracle of the medium itself. Then, before television had even outgrown its ten-inch screen, the disenchantment began to set in. Stories and ideas and a greater understanding of the medium were needed. Novelty is never enough.

It is not my intention to exhort the amateur to accept or impose on himself professional standards or attitudes, because then he usually stops having fun and begins to get pretentious. There are, however, certain basic fundamentals in movie making which, if observed, help make almost any movie more palatable. Just as good manners and the other social amenities make for a pleasanter relationship between ourselves and the people with whom we come in contact, so the observance of these film fundamentals will help promote a better relationship between

Ten Steps to Better Movies

1. *Start with an idea*
2. *Use a tripod*
3. *Watch your exposure*
4. *Shoot sequences, not snapshots*
5. *Compose your shots*
6. *Vary your shots*
7. *Edit your movies*
8. *Use titles where needed*
9. *Take advantage of technical devices for special effects*
10. *Read about movies and movie makers*



you and your audience. And if, in addition to everything else, the result should be a good film, think of the sense of achievement that will be yours.

Here's a list of ten suggestions for improving your movies.

1. START WITH AN IDEA

The minimum requirement asked of any movie reel is that it have at least one simple idea told in continuity. If you start with an idea, however tenuous, you have a reference point to which you can relate the various scenes you wish to record; the thread of continuity will grow out of the interplay of business stimulated by the initial idea.

There should be a feeling of progression in a film narrative—even if the progression is attained by nothing more complex than a chronological unfolding of a series of related events. "Begin at the beginning," advises the King in *Alice in Wonderland*, "and go on till you come to the end; then stop."

2. USE A TRIPOD

The unsteadiness of a hand-held movie camera may be so slight as to be almost imperceptible at the time of shooting, but the shakiness will appear greatly magnified when the film is projected on the screen. An unsteady screen image is annoying.

Shoot as much of your movies as possible with the camera mounted on a tripod. This alone will improve the appearance of your films about a thousand percent. And if you avoid panning the camera except when such camera movement is called for by the graphic or narrative dictates of the scene (which isn't often) you deserve a gold star on your main title.

3. WATCH YOUR EXPOSURE

Exposure makes the image. The simplest and easiest method of determining correct exposure is to use the exposure guide on the instruction sheet that comes packed with the film. A similar exposure guide is now attached to most movie cameras. Evaluating various light conditions in relation to different types of subject matter will enable you to choose the proper lens opening for almost any scene.

Another source of information is the series of inexpensive Kodaguides put out by Eastman Kodak. These dial-type calculators are easy to use and helpful in determining the correct f-settings for the various light conditions. A little experience in the use of these exposure guides will provide you with consistently well-exposed movies.

If your film work requires shooting under many varying and unusual light conditions it would be wise to invest in a photoelectric exposure meter. They are not difficult to use and they give a much more accurate measurement of illumination and brightness than is attainable with the manual dial-type calculators.

4. SHOOT SEQUENCES, NOT SNAPSHOTS

Think of action in terms of a sequence rather than a single shot. Even the simplest piece of business should be filmed as a sequence rather than an animated snapshot. For instance, Grandpa reading the evening paper. Instead of a single static shot of Grandpa reading the paper you break the idea down into series of shots. Start with a shot of the paper landing on the front porch. The door opens and we see Grandpa pick up the paper, glance at the headlines, then go back into the house. Cut into the house as we see Grandpa settle down in his favorite rocking chair. Medium shot as he wipes his glasses and puts them on. Close shot of his feet as he eases them out of his shoes. Wiggles toes. Then cut into a close shot of head and paper as he contentedly begins his perusal of the news. Fade-out. Fade-in to close shot of paper on floor, then to a full shot of Gramp sound asleep in his chair. Fade-out.

When these shots are assembled they will not only give you a good record shot of Grandpa but they will present him in a characteristic action, and they will do so through a dynamic use of the film form.

A sequence can be shorter and simpler than that or it can be longer and more complex. It should be comprised of a number of related shots which can be integrated into a complete film statement.

Even such static stuff as views of a beautiful landscape take on a quality of movement if shot in sequence: shot of hikers approaching crest of hill. Close shot of hikers as they look off camera. Cut to what they see, which is the static landscape shot, then back to hikers for a reaction which will complete the thought.

5. COMPOSE YOUR SHOTS

Motion-picture composition is based not only on the arrangement of the various elements in the picture but also on the pattern of movement that takes place within the film frame. In addition to the relationship in size, shape, tonal value and position of the characters and objects one to the other, as well as their relationship to the background, you must also take into consideration the directional lines in which the characters and objects move.

Selectivity makes the picture. Before you start shooting study the possible setups through the camera view finder.

To help you evaluate the compositional possibilities of a scene consider these questions:

First, and most important, in regard to motion-picture composition: will the action that is to take place in the scene read clearly? Does anything in the foreground or background distract or in any way obscure the main action?

Does the center of interest, or area of interest, dominate the composition? Or is there a division of interest?

Are the figures too large or too small in the film frame? Are they too close together or too far apart?

How does the quality and direction of light affect the composition? Does it focus attention on the area of greatest interest? Does the light delineate the figures clearly? Does it separate the figures from the background? Does the quality of light express the mood of the scene?

Consider viewpoint. Does the design of the shot contribute to, or detract from, the idea or story point to be expressed in the scene?

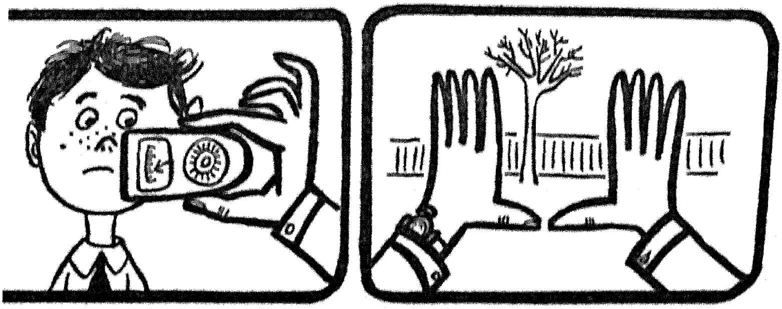
Do the compositional lines in the frame conflict, or in any way lead the eye of the spectator away from the area of interest?

Does the line of the horizon cut the picture in half? This is a compositional cliché; actually the line of the horizon can be placed anywhere including right across the middle of the composition, if you know what you're doing. For instance, if the story calls for a scene in which the mood is one of complete calm, then the horizon placed dead center in the composition would help convey that static quality.

Consider the background. Backgrounds must be appropriate to the action being filmed. They establish locale and they help set the mood.

How does the movement of the figures relate to the lines and masses of the background? Will the background be more effective if it is sharp, or if it is out of focus?

While shooting the picture we often get so engrossed in the main action that we become oblivious of the background until we screen the film. Then, when it's too late to do anything about it, the poorly chosen background

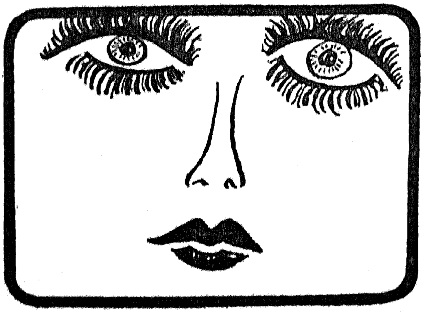


shows up like a raucous intruder to rob the main action of its effectiveness.

Many excellent settings are available at no cost whatever. To start with, there's your own home; then there are the homes, yards and gardens of friends. There are the public parks, playgrounds and beaches. There are deserts, mountain areas, lakes, rivers, streams, meadows and pastures, depending on where you live. Most city streets and exteriors of public buildings can be used without special permission as long as you do not cause too much disturbance. There are railroad depots, waterfronts and docks, and municipal airports. The place you work can sometimes be made available nights or weekends. Permission to use or trespass on private property will, in many cases, be granted upon a courteous request accompanied by your assurance that no damage will be done. If you can't find exactly what you need use your ingenuity to adapt what is available.

6. VARY YOUR SHOTS

A movie reel made up of medium shots taken from eye level is monotonous. To increase interest and create visual excitement choose camera angles that will emphasize and dramatize the material being filmed.



Step 3. Watch your exposure
Step 5. Compose your shots
Step 6. Vary your shots

Some subjects look best when photographed from directly in front; others can be shown to greater advantage by being filmed from an oblique angle. If it will tell your story better, get up high and shoot down on your subject, or drop your camera position and shoot upward from a low angle, or choose a viewpoint in which the shape of an interesting object silhouetted in the foreground will act as an interrupting form while the main action takes place in the middle distance. A word of warning: angle shots are like spices—a little goes a long way. Another caution: never allow the use of the camera to be so obvious that it will call attention to itself, because then it defeats its own purpose.

Close-ups carry impact. They scrutinize the emotions in people's faces. A liberal use of close-ups will give your reel the kind of intimacy needed by home movies. If your camera has a lens in a focusing mount, you merely move in close, measure the distance from lens to subject, set the lens for that distance and shoot. If you have a fixed-focus lens, the addition of an inexpensive supplementary lens will make it possible for you to achieve a comparable result.

The easiest way to obtain extreme close-ups of flowers and other small objects is to attach the camera to a titler, then center the object to be photographed in the title frame and the built-in supplementary lens on the titler will provide a sharp close-up image.

7. EDIT YOUR MOVIES

To begin with, this calls for a simple job of cutting. Go through your reels and cut out all the mistakes, bad takes, fogged film, duplicate shots and any and all scenes that are so far under- or overexposed as to be indistinct. This doesn't even require an editing viewer; you can do it with a projector and a film splicer. You'll be astonished at how much better a photographer you'll appear to be.

8. USE OF TITLES

Use them where you need them. I'm not an advocate of film titles but I do think you need a main title, if only to let your audience know what they're in for; and an end title to tie the thing up and give it a feeling of completion. If the body of the movie requires some explanation, a minimum of subtitles is recommended. Avoid literary language and say what has to be said simply and directly. Also, avoid noodling up the titles with too much art work.

9. USE OF SPECIAL EFFECTS

Take advantage of technical devices for special effects. Fades and cross-dissolves are not actually classified as special effects, they are an indispensible part of the grammar of the film idiom. The use of slow motion, accelerated motion, reverse motion, double exposure, animation, wipes, matte shots and other trick effects, when skillfully done and used sparingly, give your movies an added professional polish.

10. READ ABOUT MOVIES AND MOVIE MAKERS

Reading about the various techniques and the diverse theories and concepts of movie making will stimulate new ideas and broaden your motion-picture horizon. There are books from the simplest home movie primers through volumes covering every aspect of motion-picture technique. There are also books by and about movie makers, histories of the movies, sociological studies of the effects of movies and so on up to a number of volumes now considered classics of motion-picture theory. For a suggested reading list see Appendix IV, Select Bibliography.

In summing up, let me say that anyone can make a reasonably good movie record: you point the camera, set the lens and shoot. To make an entertaining movie is not so easy. Before you point the camera you must have an idea. That requires some thought and effort, and that's where the real interest comes in. Movie making is a form of play that is more than a hobby; it is a constructive activity. You make movies not to keep you quiet and contented in your leisure time but to stimulate and excite you. In this way movie making is an absorbing challenge. And the gratification that comes from achieving a difficult objective is no small reward.

Part Two / Pre-production: the story

> *I believe many people have, in their consciousness, living images that would give them the greatest joy to bring out.*
>
> —D. H. LAWRENCE

Getting film ideas

INSPIRATION

3

When I paint my object is to show what I have found. . . .

—PICASSO

Where do ideas come from? How do the artists and craftsmen who make a living creating ideas for movies, plays, television, books, cartoons and picture stories manage to turn out consistently workmanlike ideas that range from skillfully expressed platitudes to those occasional flashes of insight that may delight or disturb, surprise, startle, stimulate or provoke their audience?

A man whose livelihood depends upon the ideas he can create or contrive on order cannot afford to sit idly about waiting to be struck by that one inspired thought that will present itself to him complete, fully realized and ready to be sold. He works, he woos, he digs, he dredges, he does everything including walking away from the problem in the hope he can lure to the surface of his mind the thoughts and ideas that lie hidden in the unconscious recesses of his being.

And how does all this apply to you? Well, to begin with, you were once fascinated by the whole exciting idea of film making. You tantalized yourself by reading all the glittering advertisements about all the different movie cameras: what they would do, what they wouldn't do, and how life just wouldn't be complete without one. You browsed around the camera shops; fondly you examined the cameras, pushed buttons, wound cranks, squinted through view finders. You encouraged the salesmen to tell you how much you needed the camera, how empty your life had been without one, what joy would be yours as the proud owner of that magic mechanism. When you had brought yourself to the boiling point you slapped some money on the counter and lovingly took the little object of your affection to be your very own. While you read the instruction booklet thousands of fragmentary ideas for exciting productions danced elusively round in your head. Then after you shot a few reels of baby stuff, a reel on your vacation, and some miscellaneous footage of the dog, a sunset, and a couple of visiting relatives, a disconcerting thing happened: you couldn't think of anything else to film.

Perhaps you've wondered about all those ideas you once had, or thought you had. Where did they disappear to? What happened to them?

Let's investigate.

The ideas you thought you had, you had—but they weren't full-fledged ideas. They were a mixture of the ephemeral impulses and wishful thinking that crowd the minds of would-be professionals in every field of creative work. Not ideas, but daydreams and reveries. The professional also indulges in these daydreams and reveries, but with a difference: he uses them as a starting point for his thinking.

Most people unaccustomed to working with ideas have a notion that ideas burst upon one full-blown; and because the thoughts, hunches and impulses that occur to them are vague and tenuous, they dismiss them without further thought. Yet this is the form in which most ideas first manifest themselves.

One of the qualities that distinguish genius is a high degree of sensitivity and response to these intuitive impulses, these seemingly irrelevant flickerings of thought that light briefly on the periphery of consciousness. "In every work of genius," wrote Emerson, "we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. The highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what (other) men thought, but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind. . . . Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his."

If we do not place a proper value on our own thoughts, "tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take . . . our own opinion from another."

IDEAS MUST BE CULTIVATED

A friend of mine, a writer, once told me that whenever someone discovered he was a professional writer the person would sooner or later approach him with an idea for a story. A terrific idea, the fellow with the idea would say. Then he would invariably make this proposition: he would give the terrific idea to the writer to write up; if it sold, and the fellow was sure it would, he would split the check fifty-fifty with the writer. The writer would then say he had a better proposition: if the fellow with the idea would write the story himself the writer would help him in every way he could; consequently, when the story sold, the fellow could keep all the money himself. The fellow would be delighted. He would go home, put a piece of paper in the typewriter and start to write. After sweating it out for hours he would finally finish his first page. When the embryo writer read his first completed page he would be so deflated by the clumsiness and inadequacy of his writing that he would throw the page into the wastebasket and give up in disgust. Now, said my friend to me, that's the difference between an amateur and a professional. When a professional finishes the first page of a story it often looks just as clumsy and inadequate as the amateur's first page, and the professional feels just as deflated. The professional throws away his first page too. The difference is that the professional puts a second piece of paper in his typewriter and writes a second page. The second page is not much better than the first, so he writes a third page which shows some improvement, but not enough, so he discards that and writes a fourth, then a fifth, and so on, until he gets to about the twelfth version of his first page. This says what he wants it to say, and finally he has his beginning.

A professional knows that most of the time the first stuff he does will not be good. He might hope that it will be, but he doesn't expect it. He is prepared to develop and discard a great deal of preliminary work because he knows by experience that this is the pattern; that ideas attain their final form and substance only after they have been worked over and put through an involved process of refinement.

THE CREATIVE STATE

Creating ideas involves an act of faith, a belief that the ideas are there within you, or around you, and that they will manifest themselves if, while you go about your work, you will also maintain an alert and receptive consciousness.

A charming anecdote illustrating this concept of the creative process was quoted by Walter Winchell in his newspaper column: "What is faith? A five-year-old once informed her Sunday school teacher that she was drawing a picture of God. The teacher inquired: 'How do you know what God looks like?' The child promptly explained: 'That is why I am drawing him. I want to find out.' "

Gertrude Stein said the same thing in another way. "You will write," she said, "if you will write without thinking of the result in terms of a result, but think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper. . . ." Or between camera and subject.

It doesn't matter whether a man works with words or with sounds, with images in paint or images on film, the pattern of the creative process is identical. We know the facts about the process and we understand the mechanics of it, but there is still an element of mystery involved, an element which is beyond our comprehension.

"What about the creative state?" asks E. M. Forster in an illuminating essay on "The Raison d'être of Criticism in the Arts." "In it a man is taken out of himself. He lets down as it were a bucket into his subconscious, and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing with his normal experiences, and out of the mixture he makes a work of art. It may be a good work of art or a bad one—we are not here examining the question of quality—but whether it is good or bad it will have been compounded in this unusual way, and he will wonder afterwards how he did it. Such seems to be the creative process. It may employ much technical ingenuity and worldly knowledge, it may profit by critical standards, but mixed up with it is this stuff from the bucket, this subconscious stuff, which is not procurable on demand. And when the process is over, when the picture or symphony or lyric or novel (or whatever it is) is complete, the artist, looking back on it, will wonder how on earth he did it. And indeed he did not do it on earth."

IDEAS IN ENVIRONMENT AND BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

How can all that theory be applied to the practical problem of trying to find an idea for a home movie?

You want to make a movie. You have a camera and plenty of film, but you need an idea. Where do you start? What do you do first? Where's the bucket? And which way to the subconscious?

First start thinking about things that interest you. Don't think consciously of the subconscious or the creative process or any of these things—that will stop you dead. Think about the things that mean something to you, things you know best, familiar things.

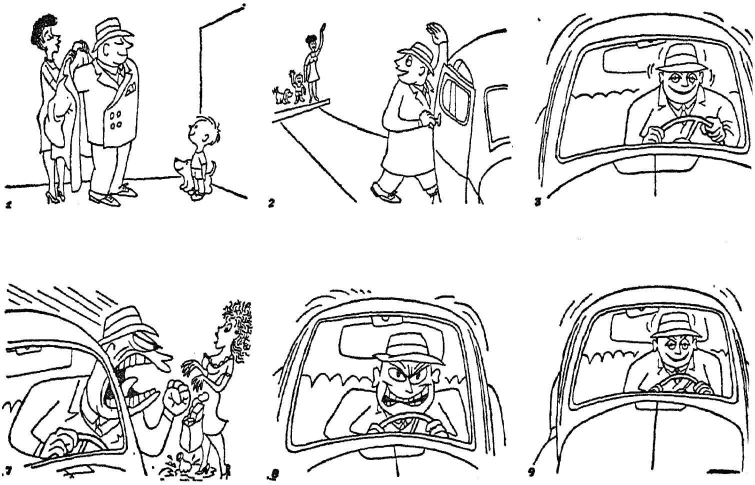
In the beginning your mind will be flooded by a welter of thoughts and images; these will be automatically sifted and sorted. After a while your interest will begin to focus down on a few subjects that seem to have possibilities. Finally you choose one subject and begin exploring it.

The process is very much like panning for gold. You shovel up a lot of mud and water and toss it into a sieve. Then you shake it around until all the sludge and water is drained off; then you examine what's left for a trace of gold dust.

Your method of film making should derive its ideas and themes from your normal environment. Home movies need not depend on fabricated drama with built-in motivations. Examine the people and the life around you; weave a narrative pattern out of the everyday materials of your work, your family, your avocational interests, your home.

Look for the natural drama and humor inherent in human behavior. You could have fun making a series of short films illustrating the foibles of man, the contrast between the dignity he aspires to, and the weaknesses and idiosyncrasies he exhibits in action. Don't try to build stories at first, just develop a series of incidents.

As an example of the kind of thing I mean see the accompanying cartoon illustration. I have dramatized the metamorphosis that takes place when man gets behind the wheel of an automobile and is transformed into a monster. The cartoon grew out of an observation of human behavior—my own, as well as the behavior of friends and acquaintances. The difference between the actions I observed and those I have projected into the cartoon was a difference only of degree. The illustrated actions were

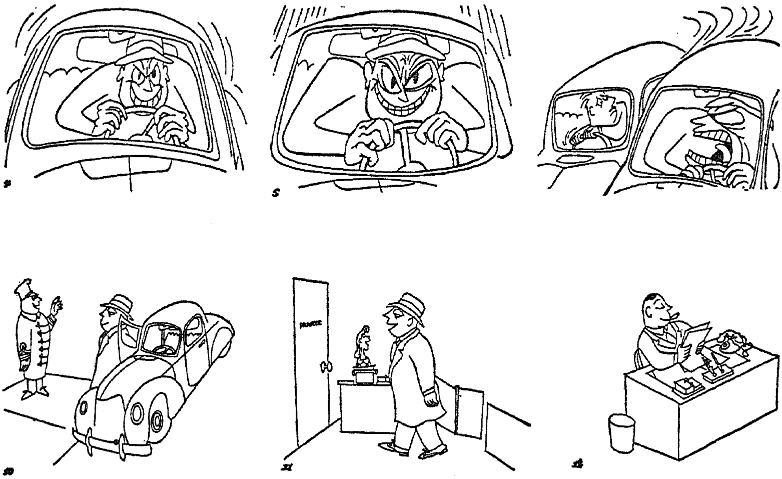


exaggerated to emphasize the point being made. The idea was not contrived, it was elicited from life.

IDEAS BY SUGGESTION AND ASSOCIATION

One of the remarkable characteristics of an idea, any idea, is the generous way it responds to a little cogitation. An idea is an organic thing like a seed. It is capable of growth: if it is cultivated it will take root; it will blossom and bloom; and ultimately it will bear fruit.

Sometimes in searching for an idea you will have to look to external sources for stimulation. Newspapers and magazines are excellent sources of movie raw material, provided you read them with a mind alert and on the lookout for ideas. The playwright Henry Arthur Jones, commenting on the value of newspapers as source material, said: "The daily newspaper, which makes no pretense toward art, is accustomed to report life in the raw.



That is what I am always looking for. I can do my own thinking about motives and characterization, if only the newspaper will tell me what actually happened. Give me the facts, and I can make the fiction."

After you get through the news items, glance through the movie advertisements. Do any of the titles suggest possibilities for a home movie? How about making a satire or take-off on one of the current hit movies? The movie will give you your story line, and then you can have fun doing a burlesque on the picture itself. Incidentally, the format of a television show such as *This Is Your Life* would be a natural for a home-movie continuity.

Scan the titles on your bookshelves. I just ran across *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*—does that suggest a movie of your own housing problem? Your efforts to build or remodel a house? Or your first attempts at painting or wallpapering a room? Or, to get down to something fundamental: trying to fix a leaking faucet.

It's a subject that's been done frequently, but, as one of the comics is quoted as saying, "How can you tell if an idea is funny or not if it's never been done before?"

Let's improvise a bit and see if we can get it off the ground.

We'll start with the first annoying drip-drip-drip. Your wife reacts. She asks innocently if you can fix it or is it too complicated and should she call in a plumber? And just when you had settled down with a beer and a newspaper in front of the television set. Better yet, maybe it's Saturday and you had been looking forward all week to your game of golf. Drip-drip-drip-drip. Never mind, your wife says, you go out and play with the boys; I'll fix the faucet. You say, No, *I'll* fix it. It will take only a few minutes.

Grudgingly you gather up your tools and start. You take the handle off the faucet and maybe you get soaked, or you can't find the right size washer, which entails a trip to the hardware store. You are in a hurry to get the chore over with; you're thinking about the other three guys waiting impatiently for you at the first tee. You go through a boulevard stop and a cop stops you. You're sore and you tell the cop, "That'll show her!" The cop looks at you and says, "That'll show who?" "My wife!" you tell him. "It's all her fault!" The cop gives you a sidelong glance and goes right on writing out the ticket.

You get to the hardware store and it's closed because it's a holiday, or they are open but they are out of that size washer, and so on. It's one of those days when everything goes wrong. After all kinds of trouble you finally get back home with the washer. There's your wife sitting on the drainboard with her feet in the sink. She's soaked, and she's trying to cut a washer out of an old bath mat. You look at her in astonishment. She looks at you, suddenly conscious of her appearance. You break into a laugh, and she joins you. You give her a kiss for a good try, then you put the washer in the faucet, the drip disappears, and you drive off to meet the boys at the eighteenth hole—or is it the nineteenth?

If the book titles don't do anything for you, try flipping through the classified advertising section of your telephone directory and see if any of the businesses or occupations suggest a movie idea.

If there is a theme or a premise in which you strongly believe, make a film to prove your contention. If you believe that inadequate housing is a strong contributing factor in juvenile delinquency, make a film that will dramatically illustrate the premise: "*Slums Breed Crime.*" Perhaps you want to show that "*Children Need Love,*" or "*Love Conquers All,*" or "*Filming Is Fun,*" or "*People Are Funny,*" or "*My City Is Ugly, Unique* or *Beautiful.*"

Another system you might try is the visual stimulus approach. Here's how it works. You look at pictures in magazines and study the various elements in the pictures until your mind responds to one of them and starts off on a tangent. For instance, you look at an illustration showing a woman cleaning house. As your eye wanders around the picture it settles on the vacuum cleaner that is being used. The vacuum cleaner starts you thinking about rugs. Rugs suggest Aunt Ruth, who gave you the rag rug in the children's room. Aunt Ruth lives in Puente, which is in California, which brings to mind the train trip you took out there. This in turn starts you thinking about trains, which reminds you that Junior now has quite a collection of model trains which, come to think of it, ought to make a good subject for a movie reel.

Sometimes you can get ideas by running unedited footage over and over until a narrative pattern begins to emerge out of the material itself. The narrative can then be developed and clarified through judicious editing. Then additional footage is shot to bridge whatever lapses there are in continuity.

There are times when music, or a particular recording, can act as a kickoff for a film.

An unlimited fund of ideas can be found in fables, fairy tales, myths and legends. Jean Cocteau, approaching fairy tales with the faith of childhood, filmed an enchanting and highly successful live-action version of Beauty and the Beast. Later, Cocteau created an extraordinary film fantasy in his modern-dress version of the Greek legend of Orpheus.

Walt Disney has also been working the rich vein of legend and fable. He has made animated short subjects as well as feature-length cartoons from such familiar stories as The Ugly Duckling, The Three Little Pigs, The Grasshopper and the Ants, Snow White, Cinderella, and Peter Pan. He goes to the same source for his live-action features such as Robin Hood, Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea, and Davy Crockett.

Films have been made on almost every conceivable subject. There have been films on children and about children, on animals and adventure, films for education, films on physical and mental health, on art, music, and film, on religion, on people and places. Whatever subject you feel strongly about ought to be examined for the germ of a film idea.

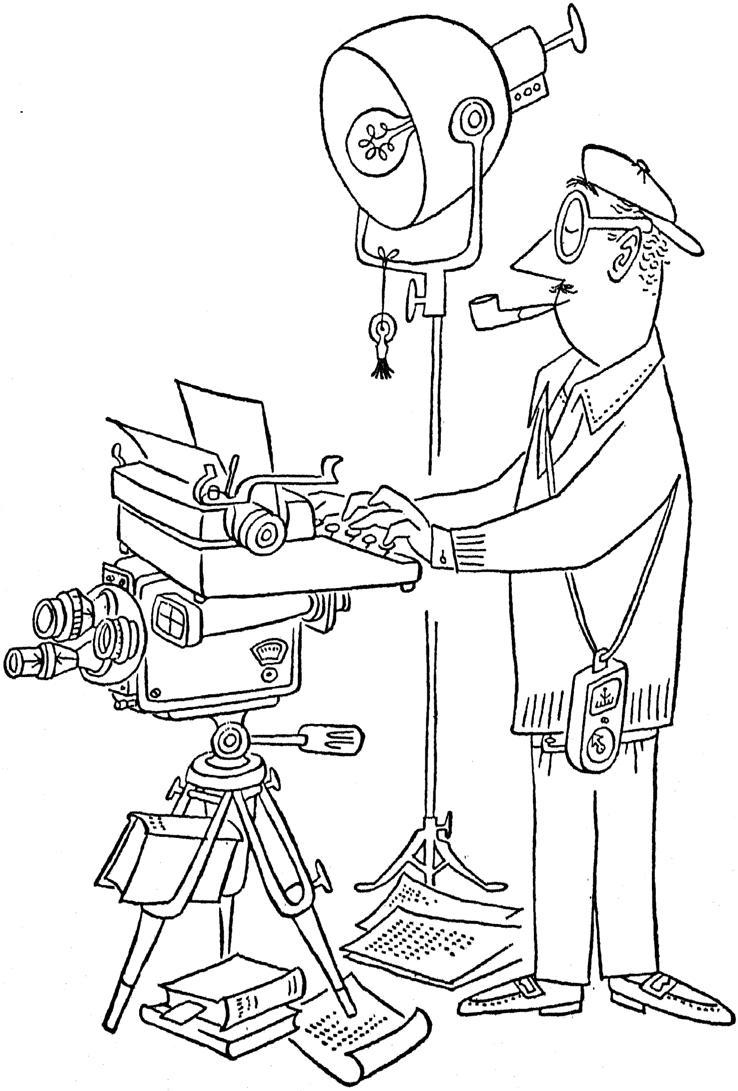
There are as many ways of getting ideas as there are people, but one thing holds true throughout: any system of creative thinking involves a form of free association, a procedure in which you examine or write down your thought flow, word for word, without censorship.

You cannot create in a vacuum. There must be a stimulus, which, in turn, causes a response; the response is the flow of freely associated ideas that surge into the mind.

Put your thinking down in a concrete form: make notes, jot down key words, draw or doodle, or, if you prefer, start filming directly by free association. These things give you something tangible to work with; they indicate a direction, and they prevent your thinking from going round in a circle.

All these methods and suggestions are devices for breaking a mental stalemate, but in the end a home movie should say what you feel, and it should carry the stamp of your identity. In making a home movie you answer to no one but yourself. Film a thing as you feel it, as you respond to situation and environment, and—most important—follow your own instinct.

The movie maker as story teller



4

The eye of the mind must be dominant; for only when you have exhausted the possibility of projecting an idea, a character or a conflict visually, does the competent screenwriter turn to the more complicated dimension of the word.

—DUDLEY NICHOLS

The average person about to take up movie making as a hobby approaches it as a photographic medium rather than a narrative medium. He starts out logically enough by learning how to operate the camera, how to expose film, how to evaluate light, how to cut and splice and project his films, and whatever else he needs to know of photographic technique; then he starts making movies.

That's all right as far as he's gone, but he has learned only half of his technique: he has learned photography but he hasn't learned anything about the technique of telling a story. And movie making is essentially story telling, regardless of whether the story to be told is a fiction story, a documentary or a family film journal.

Take two average people both embarking upon movie making as a hobby at the same time. One concentrates almost exclusively on the photographic approach while the other concentrates his attention on the dramatic or story-telling approach. It is my contention that after both have acquired a comparable degree of proficiency in their individual approaches to movie making, the fellow applying the methods of the story teller will make livelier and more entertaining movies than the one whose approach is to make photography an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

A good story will always capture and hold interest, even at times when it is poorly told, while the best photo technique in the world, if it isn't used as a means of communicating an idea, is dull and of no more general interest than a finger exercise in typing.

WORDS AND PICTURES

A film is not so much written as it is composed. Film story telling means utilizing the technical resources unique to the movie medium. These are primarily image, movement, sound and color.

In developing a film story you do not have to write words, you can "write" or compose directly on film. An idea is explored and expanded during the actual shooting of the film, and if the material is approached openly and receptively the subject matter will dictate a continuity as the filming progresses.

The use of significant visual images can make the story points more eloquently than any amount of verbal description, subtitles or talk. In its final stages the story can be clarified and resolved in editing.

Obviously there are two sides to the question regarding the value of written shooting scripts. A bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art entitled "Film Notes, Part 1, The Silent Film," states that one of the greatest films of the silent era, *The Birth of a Nation,* was made by D. W. Griffith from a novel purchased for the screen. At no time during the shooting did Griffith use a scenario. He worked out his screenplay as he rehearsed and moved groups of characters around. That was in 1914.

Roberto Rosselini, the great Italian film maker, who in recent years made such impressive films as *Open City* and *Paisan,* claims that he uses no shooting script, carries the story in his head, and not until the set is lighted and the actors appear does he write the dialogue.

On the other hand there are innumerable equally fine directors who will not shoot a frame of film until they have a complete and comprehensive shooting script plus the pre-production design sketches that illustrate not only the setting for each shot, but the lighting key, the mood, the action of the figures, the distance of the shot and the specific camera angle. The director's function in such instances is limited to directing the performances of the actors.

Whether you use a shooting script or not is a matter of individual preference, but there is no argument as to the value and necessity of a good story.

STORY STRUCTURE

What is a story?

Generally, a story concerns itself with what a character does when he or she is confronted with a problem. The problem, no matter how insignificant it may appear to others, must be of vital importance to the protagonist.

The essential function of a story in presenting a problem is to show what people do when affected by that problem and how, as individuals, they react to it.

The structure underlying most stories can be broken down into three main parts:

The beginning, in which you state the story problem and in general tell your audience what's going on and foreshadow what is about to happen.

The middle, in which the story builds to a crisis and causes the audience to wonder how it will turn out.

The climax and end, in which the story problem is resolved and all the loose threads are neatly tied up.

Describing story structure always makes it sound more complicated than it is. For instance, here's how simple it can actually be in practice. The beginning: a wife wants her husband to mow the lawn and he would rather be playing with his movie camera. You have two people in active opposition, which creates a story problem. The middle of the story would be concerned with how the wife goes about trying to get her husband to mow the lawn and how he tries to frustrate her efforts. The climax would be the showdown, in which there is a comic struggle or chase and he gives in or she gives up and the story is over.

In developing a story you start by selecting the material for the story, and rejecting everything that is not relevant. Next, you arrange the material in a logical design—that is, the narrative pattern—and, if possible, it should build to a climax. The final step is the telling of the story, the graphic presentation of the material.

A story can be fabricated, or it can be "found" in the environment. Whether you prefer to fabricate a story or to find it, keep in mind that you cannot take drama from life just as it happened: life is sloppy, life is inartistic, life has a disregard for the distribution of timing, drama and conflict. The material from life has to be rearranged; it has to be modified, organized and dramatized.

THE STORY OUTLINE

Here's a simple form of story outline that is very helpful when you're bogged down in trying to work out an idea:

Object:	Protagonist sets out to obtain or achieve something which is important to him; or he may be running away from something he fears, some imminent peril.
Obstacles:	The obstacles in his path that impede his progress toward the goal he is trying to attain. It's the obstacles that create the conflict.
Outcome:	The battle which will give us our climax and end.

Suppose you have a daughter who likes to dance. She is taking lessons, and you would like to have a film record of her progress. Instead of going out in the yard and shooting a few feet of her executing a turn, another shot of her kicking, and a number of disconnected shots of her improvising, let's see if we can incorporate the shots recording her dance progress in a narrative.

Here's how the outline could be used in developing such a narrative.

Protagonist:	Your wife.
Object:	She is trying to complete your daughter's

costume for the dancing school's Spring Recital.

Obstacles: The recital is to take place next day. Mother has to do the final fitting, put in the zipper and sew on the sequins. Daughter is trying to practice her dance and at the same time Mother wants her to hold still while she completes the fitting. Daughter can't stand still; she is up on her toes, then down into a deep knee-bend, while Mother is patiently attempting to fit, measure and pin the costume. There are a series of interruptions, the phone rings, other children call to play, a neighbor comes to borrow something, or a door-to-door salesman calls. Whenever Mother is interrupted Daughter immediately goes into her dance. These steps and movements she does are the record shots of her progress, and the rest of the business creates a frame of reference for them: as long as daughters take dancing lessons mothers will always be sewing costumes for recitals that always seem to be taking place next day.

Outcome: In spite of all the obstacles Mother finally completes the costume by midnight. The climactic scenes of the film could be the footage shot during the Recital itself, and the last scene could be the children taking their bow at the final curtain.

Here is a more detailed outline covering the major points of story structure.

1. *Who.* The protagonist. The character who has to solve the problem in the story.
2. *What.* The problem. The trouble. It should be an objective not easily attained or a problem not easily solved.
3. *Why.* Why does he want what he wants? Why does he fear what he fears?
4. *Why.* Why can't he have it? Or why can't he avoid it? These are the obstacles that stem from the environment and also from his own character. All the reasons why he can't have what he wants, or can't avoid what he fears, are the obstacles which set up the conflict in the story. The obstacles create a mounting tension as the protagonist almost gets out of trouble, then, bang! he's into more.
5. *When.* The time the story takes place.
6. *Where.* Locale.
7. *How.* How does the protagonist achieve his objective? What steps does he take toward achieving his goal?
8. *Why.* The why of the whole story. The motivation for the story. What are you trying to say in the story? What is the point you are trying to prove? This is the premise or theme of your story.

WHAT IS PLOT?

Plot is one of the indispensable elements in the fiction film. Plotting is the organization of ideas and material into a dramatic story form. Plot is the plan; it is the structure, the design, the pattern of the story. Everything in a fiction story must hew to the line of the plot.

A plot must develop a situation that presents a vital problem which is carried through to a logical and dramatic conclusion. The solution to the problem must be impeded by complications which lead to a crisis and culminate in a climax.

One good incident can be the nucleus of a story, but don't mistake an incident or a series of incidents for plot. An incident has no problem; it can't be resolved.

The test of a plot is that it must have a plot problem or situation, complications, crisis and climax.

Situation. A predicament in which something vital is at stake, or a problem which demands that a decision be made. The big headache in a story is the problem which the hero has to solve; it is the thing that propels and motivates the story. The problem does not have to have great depth or portent, but it must be important to the characters involved. Introduce all the major characters during the opening situation.

In order to gain a sense of immediacy give the situation a deadline, indicate the urgency of something being done about it right away. In revealing the protagonist's problem you are saying to your audience, "Look! This guy is in trouble, bad trouble. And he's going to have a rough time trying to get out of it." Promise trouble in the first minute or two if possible, then indicate that more trouble will grow from that.

Complications. Complications and conflict can come only from good plotting and good characters. Once the main character has made a decision, he is dedicated to a certain course of action, and as a result of his action he is caught up in a series of obstacles and complications. Make the hero's problem so difficult that the solution seems impossible. An audience pays to see how tough you can make it on the hero and to watch him squirm and try to extricate himself.

Crisis. This is the point in the story where the audience holds its breath. Both sides have marshaled their full forces for the fray; everything has come to a head. It is the point at which the hero must make the most important decision in the story. His decision and what follows as a consequence between the crisis and the climax prove the theme of the story. As a general rule, if the story is to end happily, the situation should look dark during the crisis; if the end is to be tragic, then the situation at the crisis should appear to be a happy one.

Climax. The climax should be brief. It is the strongest, highest point of the story. It is the final resolution to the plot problem: it seals the fate of the characters. There is a certain paradoxical quality about a climax because it must be a surprise and yet it must be completely plausible.

HATCHING A PLOT

In developing plots you can use either the inductive or the deductive method. The inductive method begins with details and particulars and builds them into a cohesive plot. It moves from cause to effect. The deductive method starts by examining an end result, then reconstructs the plot in reverse, working back from effect to cause.

Start your plot by dreaming up a protagonist, then make him a likable person. Give him a name, then find out what he wants. Give him a problem, then complicate it—get a lot of complications. Add an antagonist, a strong antagonist or a whole gang of antagonists. Finally, after a lot of trouble, let your protagonist solve his problem.

Plot material may be drawn from many sources:

Characters, especially characters with opposite dominant character traits. In the beginning it will prove helpful in working out a plot if you will start by writing sketches of your main characters.

Emotion. Emotion makes people act. Two opposing emotions can provide the spark that will set off the story.

Reading matter: stories, clippings, headlines. Sometimes an idea will come by taking unusual headlines and juxtaposing them in various combinations. Sometimes by shuffling about characters in various news stories, you may discover the germ of a plot.

Single words gleaned from a dictionary or a thesaurus or a phone book. Better yet, take a word and then find its antonym; opposites provoke conflict.

Axioms, proverbs and quotations.

Personal experience: your own notes, hunches and impressions.

STORY INTEREST

A good story seems to be many things, and each literary critic and each writer would define it differently. The one thing that I believe would run consistently through all the definitions would be the element of interest. The story must be able to hold the spectator's interest. If it fails to do so, then, regardless of what other merits it may possess, it is not a good story.

In order to discover what interest is, and what combination of factors go together to create it, you must first become consciously aware of interest. You see it at work in good movies, good plays and good television shows; it is present in good books, magazine articles, newspaper stories and comic strips. One of the strongest bonds of interest is sympathy, being in sympathy with a character; sometimes our interest is held by our fear of a character, sometimes it is hate, and sometimes indulgent laughter. Whenever you find yourself deeply engrossed in a story, stop for a moment and see if you can analyze what it was that first aroused your interest and what devices were used to assure your continuing interest.

To create interest you must make your audience care about the people they see on the screen. Before an audience can become interested and concerned about what happens to people it must first be made to feel for them, to like them, to sympathize with them.

This is the technique that has made nonfiction films such as Disney's True Life Adventures as popular as fiction. This is the technique that has made nonfiction articles more popular today than fiction for the first time in the general-circulation magazines' history. Why this popularity? Because nonfiction articles are now written like fiction. They use fiction techniques. Where they deal with facts the facts are used to entertain as well as to inform. They personalize even the biggest organizations: they tell their stories not in terms of impersonal facts and figures, and not in terms of thousands of people but in terms of one person. A person we can get to know and care about, someone we can root for, someone whose early failures will cause us to despair and whose eventual success we can rejoice in. Someone, in other words, with whom we can identify ourselves.

Walt Disney uses a similar technique in his nature films. He presents an animal to us, then he characterizes this animal as an individual. He makes us familiar with the animal as a personality and then he dramatizes the animal's problem. Once our interest is aroused we feel a deep emotional concern over the welfare of this particular animal and we find ourselves rooting for his ultimate victory in the battle for survival.

AUDIENCE

Every idea is circumscribed; it operates within a framework determined on one hand by the subject and what you wish to say about it, and on the other hand by the audience to whom you wish to communicate.

A good story teller is always aware of his audience, and much of the dullness found in amateur films can be blamed directly on the amateur's failure to develop a sense of audience. An awareness of audience, a feeling for how an audience responds, can be cultivated only through trial and error. You do a piece of work intended to elicit a specific reaction from an audience (like trying to get a laugh on a gag), then upon showing the work you observe (meaning you sweat it out) to what degree you succeeded or failed in getting the desired response. Only through this kind of sweating out an audience can you learn to evaluate an idea in terms of audience reaction.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Telling a movie story of almost any kind is a lot like telling a joke. A joke must have a point, so must a story. In telling a joke you must know what the point of the joke is to be and, starting from the very beginning, you carefully build up step by step to that point. Step by step you delineate the characters and the situation in which they are involved, then when you spring the tag line, the point of the joke, all of the carefully planted elements fall into place in the listener's mind—he was guided to a point of expectancy and then surprised by the twist or sudden revelation of the punch line—and he rewards you with a laugh.

A good story teller relates his story simply; he establishes his characters and situation without extraneous detail and he moves in a direct line to the point of his story.

There is nothing duller than a story without a point, and a movie without a theme or premise is just as deplorable. The premise of your story acts as a guide, it enables you to determine which scenes are relevant and which are irrelevant. And if you don't think this business of relevancy plays an important part in holding the interest of your audience, let's take a look at how the same principle applies in telling jokes in which the point of the story, or the tag line, is the only reason for the story's existence.

How do you feel when the person telling a story gets so involved with who narrated the story to whom that he never seems to be able to get around to the actual story? He's the type who says, "I heard a funny story from Al who was telling me that he heard this story at lunch with a couple of fellows who had overheard it one night in a cocktail bar where a fellow was telling some other fellows . . ." All irrelevant.

Then there is the rambling story teller who rides off in all directions. "My dad used to tell a funny story about, no—I guess it wasn't my dad, it was his brother, who is a little older than he is and smoked a pipe—Uncle Phil, that is. He was a barber in Brooklyn, or was that when he lived up in Westchester? Anyway, he loved baseball games and one night he was watching that *Truth or Consequences* show on television when my Uncle Louie called. It must have been a long-distance call because Uncle Louie was living in Cleveland at the time . . . or was that when he was working as an accountant? Well, anyway . . ." And so it goes, on and on in a recital of details that have no logical connection with the point of the story. How many home-movie reels have you seen that look like a visual transcription of that?

And how about the jovial jester who laughs uproariously throughout his telling of the story but can't remember the tag line, which he assures you is one of the funniest things he ever heard, and then bursts into another paroxysm of laughter thinking about the line he never does remember.

Exasperating? They are. And yet again, how many home movies have you seen that gave the impression that they would be wonderful, too, if there was just some point to them?

This brings us to the screenplay.

A screenplay is fundamentally a description of what you intend to put on film. Therefore all writing done for the screen must be written for the camera. And just as many professional writers fail in their efforts to write for films because of their lack of understanding of the camera's potential as well as its limitations, so many amateur movie makers fail in their movie-making efforts through their lack of understanding the technique of telling a story.

All this does not mean that in order to make acceptable and enjoyable home movies you have to become a professional writer or story teller. You have already invested time and energy in learning a photographic technique; now make a comparable effort to acquire the technique of story telling. This shouldn't be too difficult, because what is mostly needed is a simple shift in emphasis: start each movie you make *not* with the idea that you are going to take pictures, but that you are going to tell a picture story.

Conflict and audience interest

5

Conflict is the heartbeat of all drama.

—LAJOS EGRI

A great part of the secret of dramatic architecture lies in the one word "tension." To engender, maintain, suspend, heighten and resolve a state of tension—that is the main object of the dramatist's craft.

—WILLIAM ARCHER

Most home movies fail to hold the interest and attention of their audience because they lack conflict. This is true in probably ninty-nine percent of all the home movies ever made. It supersedes all the faults and failures in photo technique. Lack of conflict means lacks of interest, regardless of what other merits the picture may possess. It means that your audience is sitting in the dark and watching the reels unwind without the remotest concern about what will take place in the scenes to follow.

Because your audience has been trained from childhood in the ways of courteous social hypocrisy they will maintain an attitude of polite good-humored indulgence toward your efforts. They know that after so much time has elapsed there will be an end to the showing, and then they can get back to talking or eating or watching television or whatever they were doing before the subject of home movies came up.

You may protest that these are, after all, amateur movies, and that your guest audience ought to take that into consideration. That's true, they should. But remember that your audience is a professional audience. Through years of moviegoing, and more recently as part of the large television audience, they have been conditioned to high standards of professional quality and they are bound to make comparisons.

The death, commercially, of the old travelogue reels can be pretty well attributed to the same affliction: lack of conflict. The audience was cinematically taken to China, India, Hawaii, Mexico or some other exotic land, and while the camera dwelt lovingly on picture postcard scenes of Technicolored tedium an unseen narrator told us in mellifluous tones of the beauty and magic of faraway Tehuantepec—where nothing ever happened. And so with the sinking sun we regretfully took our leave and bade a fond farewell to the quaint old-world charm of that enchanted land of the lotus, the locust and the loquacious commentator.

THE NARRATIVE QUESTION

To capture the attention of an audience a movie story should quickly present a problem. The protagonist confronted by the problem makes a decision to do something about it, and as a consequence he is thrown into conflict.

Conflict, in oversimplified terms, means that somebody consciously makes up his mind to accomplish some specific thing and then runs smack-bang into another somebody or something that is going to try to prevent him from accomplishing what he set out to do. That something which hinders him can be another person or a group of persons; it can be an element of nature or it can be his own inadequacy. It is essentially a conflict of man against man, or man against himself, or man against his environment; and environment, according to Webster, is "the aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting the life and development of an organism."

Conflict doesn't necessarily mean a fight in the literal sense—an emotional conflict can arise out of a situation in which everyone is right but each holds a different point of view. Tennessee Williams describes the drama as "a world of fiercely illuminated values in conflict." Conflict is the result of a conscious effort to achieve a goal in the face of difficulties, or to reconcile opposing points of view. The stronger the opposition, the greater the conflict.

Conflict raises a question in the audience's mind, and because this question is directly concerned with the eventual outcome of the story problem it is called the narrative question.

The narrative question occurs in its most elemental form in competitive sports: Which man will win the fight? Which horse will win the race? Which team will win the game? In a story the narrative question makes us wonder who will win the girl. Will the detective find the true murderer in time to save the falsely accused innocent? Will the Prince find Cinderella? Will Robinson Crusoe manage to stay alive on the island until he is rescued?

Once the curiosity of the audience is aroused, once they have chosen sides and pledged their sympathies, they are gripped by the uncertainty of the answer to the narrative question. The hold on their continuing interest is assured—they're dying to find out who is going to win, or how the differences between the main characters will be reconciled and the problem resolved. If the final outcome is pretty much of a foregone conclusion, there can be little suspense; but if the outcome is always in doubt, you've got them with you right up to the last fade-out.

SUSPENSE

Suspense is based on uncertainty, anxiety and expectation. Suspense grows out of fear. The keynote of suspense is setting up a dread of the worst that can happen and then not letting the audience know whether it will or it won't happen. It is not *what* happens, but the dread of what *may* happen.

An examination of the contemporary comic strips will reveal that they have made conflict and suspense, in most cases at the sacrifice of humor, the most important ingredients in their daily fare. And with good reason. They are vying for their audience in a fiercely competitive market. One moment of boredom and the reader is gone.

Here is what two of the contemporary masters of the comic strip form have to say in regard to holding an audience.

Milton Caniff, the creator of *Steve Canyon,* one of the finest of the straight-fiction narrative strips, says: "The cartoonist makes love to his reader a meager minute or two each day; for the remainder of the twenty-four hours that elfin darling who paid for the copy of the newspaper is gamboling about among other strips in the same and similar sections. Because of the brevity of the assignation, the comic artist tries to fashion a thin, taut wire of continuity upon which he hangs baubles of incident hoping to hold the customer's affection."

In a *New Yorker* profile, Al Capp, the creator of *Li'l Abner*, one of the few truly funny comic strips, has this to say about holding the interest of an audience: "Suspense is what makes people come back to a strip until they become slavishly addicted to it. I realized that when you infuriated and teased and worried your readers, you could hang on to them by the millions." And the friends and relatives sitting in your living room watching your home movies are the same people who are being held in a dither of suspense from day to day by the daily doings of their favorite characters not only in the newspaper comic strips but also on television. And that's what you're up against.

That's all right in comic strips and television plays and theatrical films, you say, but I'm not dealing with fictional make-believe—my subjects are my children, my vacations, my home and my garden, and how can you get conflict in stuff like that?

Well, let's take one of your subjects and see how we'd go about dramatizing the conflict inherent in it. We'll make a movie of your garden. The usual amateur procedure is to shoot a lot of unrelated long shots, medium shots and close-ups of flowers—The Story of My Garden. Flowers. Nothing happens.

Incidentally, this urgent need always to have something happening, or about to happen, may be pertinent only to the restless American audience. Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder, who were working as a writing-directing team some years ago, returned from a trip to Europe conscious of one big difference between American and European movies. In an interview with Archer Winsten of the *New York Post* they explained: "You have to smuggle mood into an American picture. Mood itself American audiences will not swallow. You have to be extremely clever. You do it with a shoehorn. For instance, a European opens his picture with a shot of the clouds. Then another, very beautiful. Then a third. The audience accepts it as part of the mood.

"With an American audience, the first shot of clouds they'll look at. The second, they'll look for an airplane. In the third shot the airplane has got to explode. . . ."

Now the problem is to make a movie that will utilize all the various shots of your beautiful flowers, but one which will integrate them into a dramatized story of your garden. Ask yourself some questions about that garden. What were some of the problems you had to overcome in order to grow such beautiful flowers successfully? Was water readily available, or did you have to pipe it in? Was the land smooth and fertile and ready for planting, or did it require backbreaking labor to cultivate it? And after you finally got it growing and the flowers were just bursting into bloom did you ever have to battle a gopher who was intent on eating the roots and destroying the flowers?

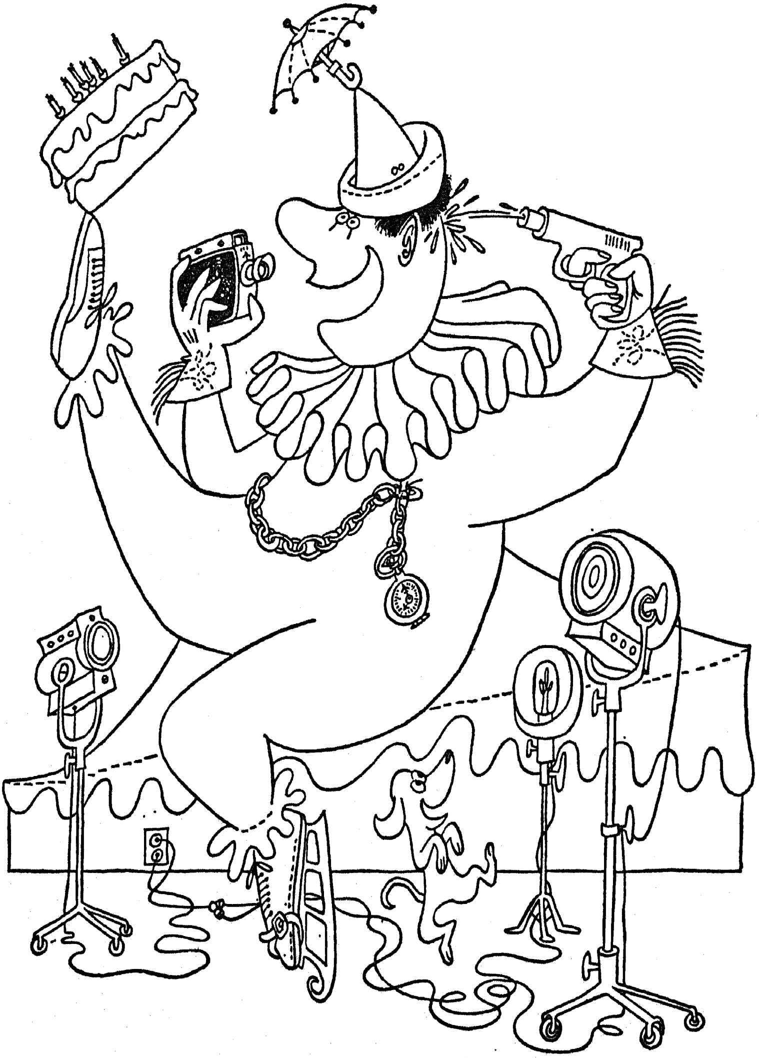
The gopher is a very real menace. He is a ruthless destroyer and a crafty opponent, and when he enters the scene you've got a conflict on your hands.

You first discover a number of gopher holes. They seem to be getting progressively closer to your prize flower bed. You try putting poison pills into the gopher hole. He doesn't show up for a day and you think you've killed him. Next morning a new hole appears in the ground and it's closer to the flower bed. You try poison bombs next, then poison gas. But to no avail. He seems indestructible. Then the moment you've been dreading: the first casualty. A beautiful plant destroyed. You get desperate. You call the local office of the Department of Agriculture for advice. You lay a trap. You lay many traps. Can you catch him before he gets all the rest of the flowers? You wait. You watch with apprehension. What will happen? And during all this conflict you cut to insert shots of all the beautiful flowers. These are at stake. They take on meaning and importance in this new context.

The menace doesn't have to be a gopher; it could be the elements: frost, a storm, or for comedy it might be the baby. She wants to pick the pretty flowers and you are trying to distract her attention from them. She gets away. She's just about to pull up the prize bloom when you discover her. She is starting to reach for it as you make a dash for her. Her fingers close around the stem. Will she pull it up before you get there? You call to her. She hears you, she turns and laughs. You're running. She tightens her grip on the plant. Will you make it in time? That's a general idea of how it's done.

When you get ready to shoot a movie, first decide what it is you want to dramatize about your subject, then select subject matter and action that will best express that idea. Drama is inherent in almost everything, but it will take some probing to find those underlying conflicts that are the roots of all drama.

Humor in your movies



6

Humour may be defined as the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life and the artistic expression thereof.

—STEPHEN LEACOCK

Humor, like all the other phases of creative work, is a highly individual gift or accomplishment. It is the result of a way of thinking. It is a touch: deft, sure, light. And even in its maddest forms it must be warm and kindly. Humor that is sardonic or bitterly critical spills over into the field of satire, which is something else again.

In trying to clarify my thinking I studied a number of definitions of humor, and although they appeared at times to be contradicting one another, each in turn seemed to be a valid statement.

For instance:

Robert Benchley says, "Humor is anything that makes anybody laugh." And "Laffing," according to Josh Billings, "iz the sensation ov pheeling good all over, and showing it principally in one spot."

Al Capp, the creator of *Li'l Abner* and a couple of other successful comic strips, swears up and down that all humor, including everything that he and Charlie Chaplin have ever done, is based on man's inhumanity to man.

Donald Ogden Stewart, movie writer and humorist, believes "Humor is based on defeat. It overcomes defeat by disparaging the goal."

James Thurber says, "Humor is a kind of emotional chaos, told about calmly and quietly in retrospect."

According to philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, "The cause of laughter is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real object."

And philosopher Immanuel Kant says, "Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing."

I agree with these various definitions, insofar as I think I understand them, because individually they reveal various facets of the same stone; I must admit though that it's almost impossible for me to think of humor in terms of philosophical abstractions. I read them, I am impressed with their profundity, then I ask myself what they have to do with humor as it is practiced.

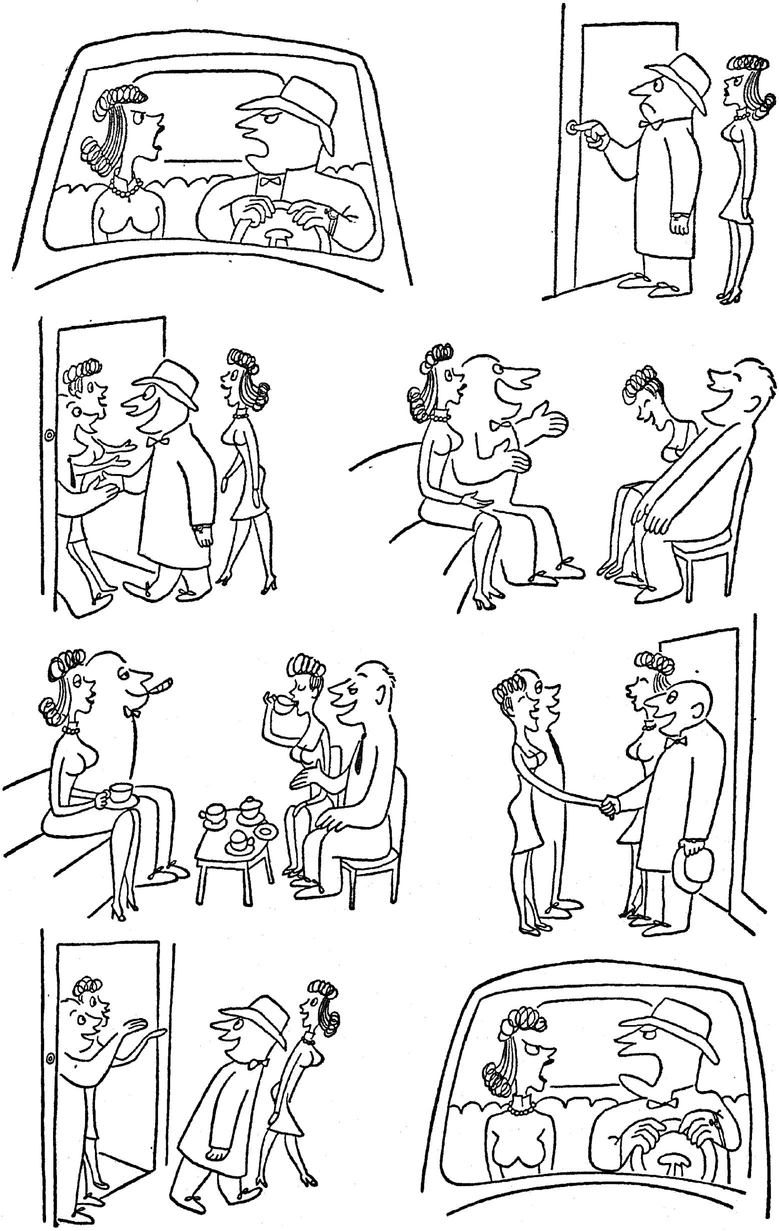
They are generalizations; humor is specific. I have a strong feeling that humor is pragmatic—that it must get across: it must reach an audience and it must get a reaction. The definitions are too far removed from the actual process of trying to create humor.

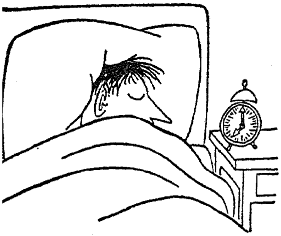
I want to see if I can come closer to the working core of comedy—to discover what comedy is, and how it differs essentially from straight drama and tragedy.

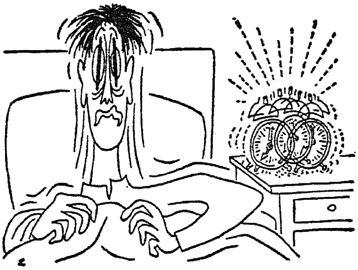
THE COMIC POINT OF VIEW

Comedy seems to me to be a matter of viewpoint. Or rather, point of view. Point of view not in terms of what is funny to one person is not funny to another (which is

Pantomime humor. The gag is based on observation of human behavior: the only exaggeration is in the drawing. The same idea could easily have been done in a film sequence.





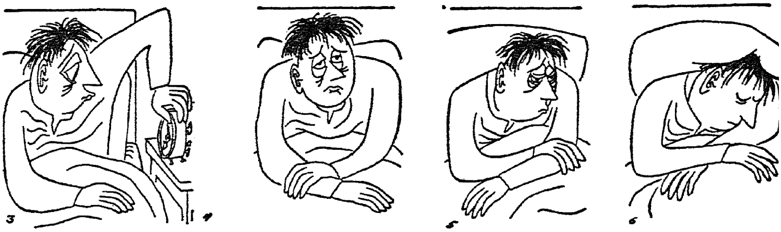


true enough), but point of view in terms of the way the artist looks at his material.

Comedy is, just as drama is, truth told from a particular point of view. That is, someone has observed some kind of truth about life and through the filter of his personality has extracted the essence of that truth. He molds and shapes that essence and then presents it to us in a heightened, dramatized form so that we may more easily perceive and understand it.

The result may cause us to laugh or it may cause us to cry, but either way we must feel that the basic observation is rooted in truth. For comedy is no less profound in its statement of truth than drama or tragedy, although far too many people still associate profundity with ponderous obscurity. As a matter of fact, both a comedy and a drama can be rooted in the same event or idea seen from two different points of view. The manner in which the idea is presented depends entirely on the viewpoint, the personality and the ability of the artist. As Horace Walpole said, "This world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel."

The material itself—the event, the idea, the observation—is simply the point of departure, the springboard. How the artist approaches that material and what he has to say about it are what we are primarily interested in,



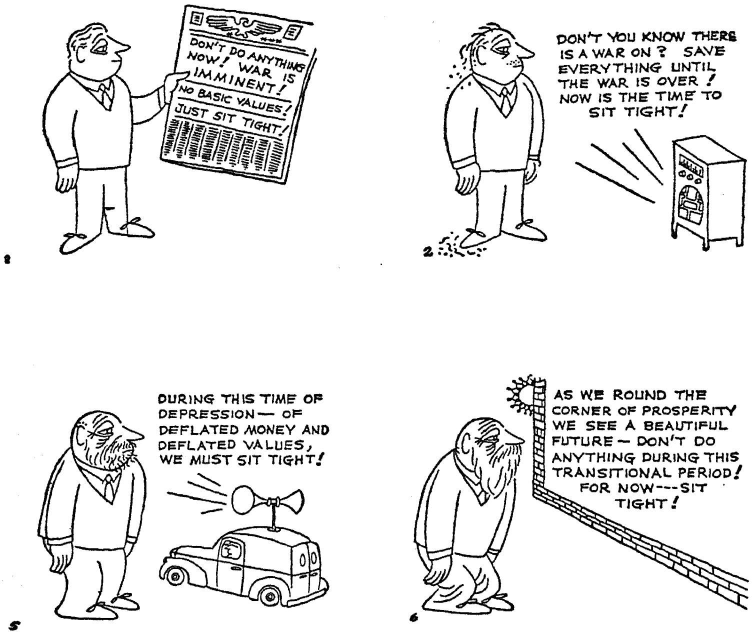
Pantomime humor. Another gag based on observation, but in this instance the drawing was more exaggerated to point up the sudden shock brought about by the alarm clock starting a man out of a sound sleep.

not in the actual event itself. The importance is in the artist's reaction to the event, his insight, his way of seeing it, his comment on it; these are the things that place an isolated incident into a larger context, that give the incident meaning.

The same event, then, could be played for comedy or drama. Or you could break that down by saying that it could be played for high comedy, satire, low comedy, farce, fantasy, drama, melodrama or high tragedy. For just as melodrama makes extravagant use of the legitimate materials of drama, so slapstick and farce make extravagant use of the legitimate materials of comedy. In the case of either melodrama or farce, the effect on the audience and the audience's response becomes important for its own sake, an end in itself, and is achieved by sacrificing a certain amount of credibility.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

As an example of how a basic idea can be projected through two different points of view let's examine a cartoon and a high tragedy both dealing with the same


1
DON'T DO ANYTHING NOW! WAR IS IMMINENT!
NO BASIC VALUES!
JUST SIT TIGHT!
2
DON'T YOU KNOW THERE IS A WAR ON? SAVE EVERYTHING UNTIL THE WAR IS OVER! NOW IS THE TIME TO SIT TIGHT!
5
DURING THIS TIME OF DEPRESSION— OF DEFLATED MONEY AND DEFLATED VALUES, WE MUST SIT TIGHT!
6
AS WE ROUND THE CORNER OF PROSPERITY WE SEE A BEAUTIFUL FUTURE — DON'T DO ANYTHING DURING THIS TRANSITIONAL PERIOD! FOR NOW---SIT TIGHT!

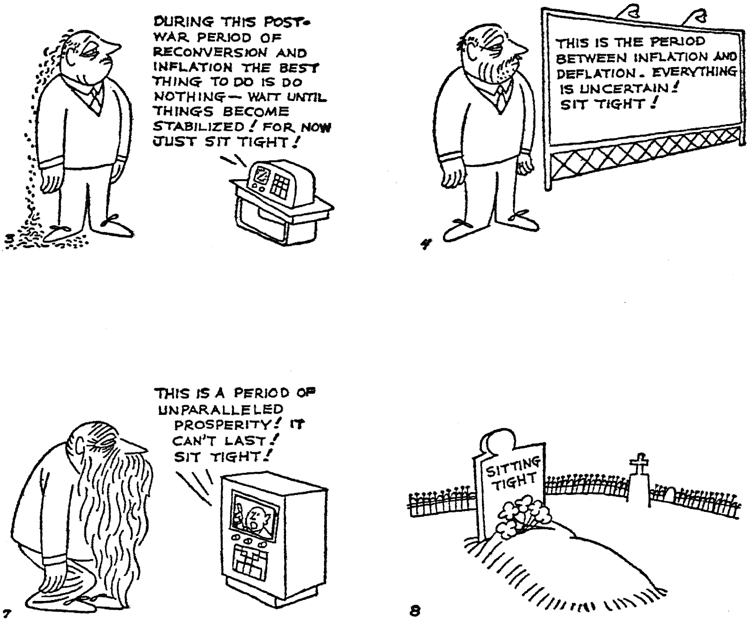
premise. The Laurence Olivier film treatment of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* stated that the story was the tragedy of a man who couldn't make up his mind. The accompanying cartoon illustration also deals with a man who couldn't make up his mind.

Hamlet makes its statement in a highly complex dramatic structure involving many characters caught in a web of conflicting ideas and motivations.

The cartoon makes its statement through a single character in a simple cartoon format.

In the cartoon as in *Hamlet* the central theme is carried to the same conclusion: both end in the death of the protagonist, both show the tragic consequence of a man's inability to make up his mind.

Both have observed a fundamental defeat in man's


3
DURING THIS POST-WAR PERIOD OF RECONVERSION AND INFLATION THE BEST THING TO DO IS DO NOTHING— WAIT UNTIL THINGS BECOME STABILIZED! FOR NOW JUST SIT TIGHT!
4
THIS IS THE PERIOD BETWEEN INFLATION AND DEFLATION. EVERYTHING IS UNCERTAIN! SIT TIGHT!
7
THIS IS A PERIOD OF UNPARALLELED PROSPERITY! IT CAN'T LAST! SIT TIGHT!
8
SITTING TIGHT

make-up and both have dramatized that defect. The cartoon reveals the comic aspects of the situation and the drama reveals the tragic aspects. The comedy is no less true because it is told in comic terms than the tragedy is true because it is told in tragic terms. "Life does not cease to be funny when people die," observed George Bernard Shaw, "any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh."

TOOLS OF COMEDY

It probably wouldn't do to ask why you want to be funny—certainly there are easier ways of making entertaining films. But then I suppose it's true that most people would confess to the most heinous crimes rather than admit the lack of a sense of humor. Why this thing has become such a precious commodity is hard to understand; but there it is. And you're probably thinking as I am, that, thank God, *I've* got a sense of humor and isn't it too bad that all those other people who have no sense of humor won't admit it.

Well, now that we've got that settled, what about humor for your movies?

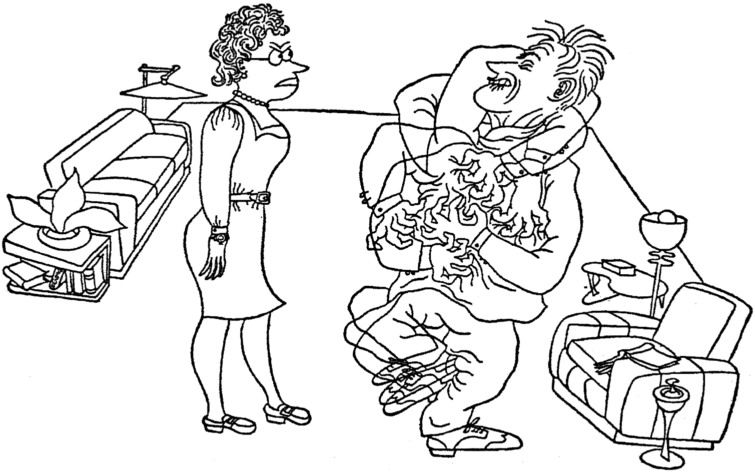
Movie humor runs the gamut of comedy: slapstick that will do anything for a laugh, farces that poke fun at the superficial dignity of pretentious phonies, domestic comedies that find fun in observing the incongruities and complications of our daily living, and an occasional satire that helps us laugh, perhaps a little nervously, at the madness, the insecurity and the hysteria that seem to pervade our time.

Much humor borders on tragedy, and the line that divides laughter from tears is a narrow one. If we can remain detached from a situation and accept it in a spirit of fun, we laugh; if we become emotionally involved, we cry.

Authentic humor grows organically out of the subject matter itself; it is never arbitrarily tacked on from the outside. It springs from observation and an inherent honesty on the part of the humorist. It means having the courage not only to be yourself but to see yourself. To hear yourself saying, "This is me, I am what I am, look at the stupid things I sometimes think and do, but aren't they funny."

The basic tools of comedy are exaggeration and incongruity.

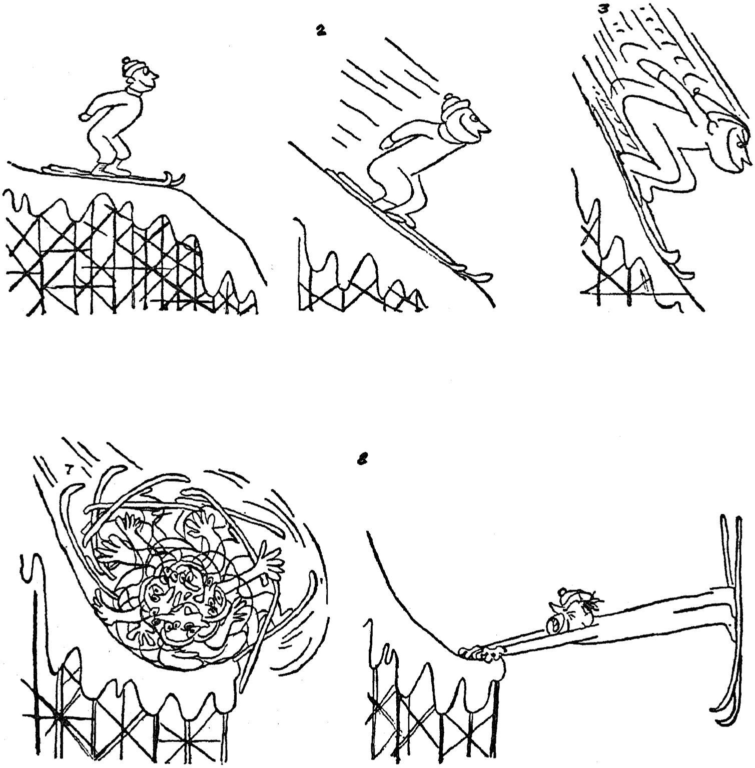
Exaggeration can be expressed through overstatement and also through understatement. Comedy can be heightened by exaggerating and intensifying actions, reactions, tensions, and piling on difficulties. Exaggeration means carrying an idea to an extreme. It means a reaction to a given situation is bigger than the situation justifies; or it is understated, it is less than the situation calls for.



"Oh, for heaven's sake, George—if you don't want to wear your woolen underwear why don't you simply say so!"

Exaggeration also means distortion; distortion of features and shapes, distortion of characters and characteristics: how skinny, how fat, how incompetent, how sad, how happy. The baggy pants denote a whole school of comedy in which the gestures are too broad, the shoes too big, the hat too small and the tie too long.

Incongruity means inconsistency; it also means para-

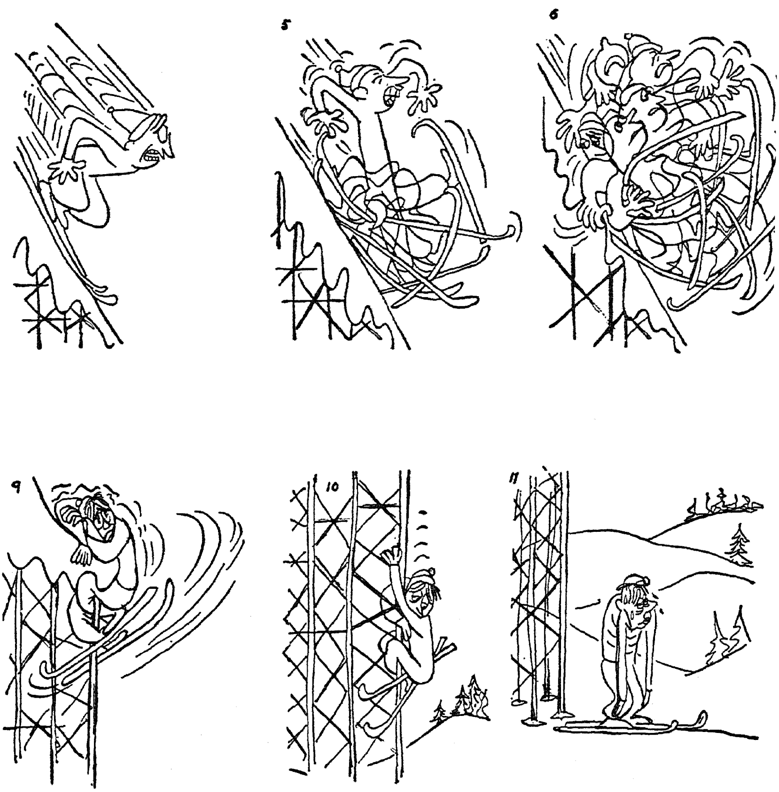


This type of humor is indigenous to the animated cartoon. It illus-

dox and contradiction. It is the inappropriateness of an action or a reaction. The simplest form of incongruity is the "reverse gag": a character reacts oppositely (in reverse) to what would be a normal reaction to a given situation.

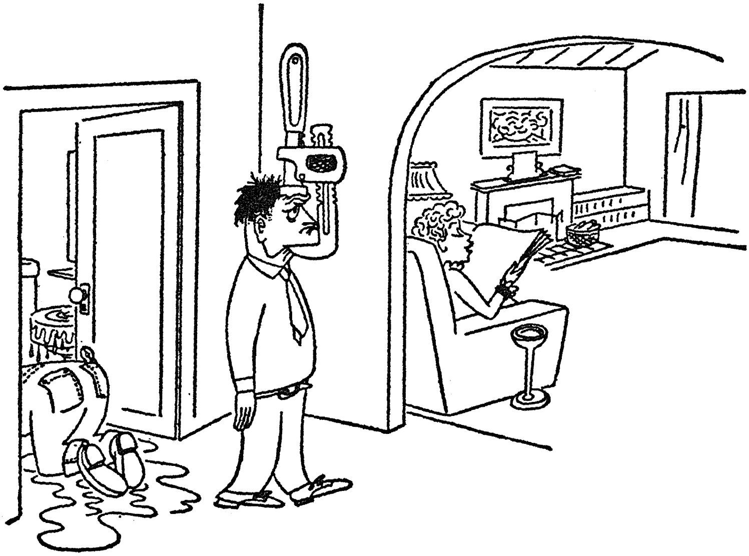
Incongruity is the format of the old Foolish Question and Bughouse Fable cartoons; its humor stems from the viewer's amused observation that this *ain't* the way things are.

Incongruity is also the ordinary commonplace state-



trates fear heightened and externalized through broad exaggeration.

ment reduced to absurdity by being placed in an extraordinary situation. Two people discussing the heat in normal surroundings with one of them commenting on the fact that "You don't feel it too much because it's a dry kind of heat" would be a commonplace; but Virgil Partch drew a cartoon of two devils surrounded by the fires of hell with one of the devils saying, "Yes, but you don't feel it as much—it's a dry kind of heat," and he had a funny gag.



"What did the plumber think of that suggestion, dear?"

Incongruity. It couldn't happen, but wouldn't it be funny if it did.

There are formulas for comedy just as there are formulas for any kind of fiction, but in my own experience I've never been able to start from a formula or a device and create a funny idea. And believe me, I've tried. However, *after* I have created a funny idea through my own stumbling, bumbling process of free association and plain hard work, it's easy enough to see where the idea fits into one of the familiar categories of comedy construction. To create comedy you must have a feel for it. Without that instinctive feel, or a cultivated intuition, you will not create anything more than a mechanical approximation of comedy. And an approximation of comedy is exactly nowhere.

An audience will accept mediocre dramas of love, adventure and mystery; it will accept the most incredible melodramas; but it will not accept a mediocre comedy. Comedy is either good comedy, meaning it is funny; or bad comedy, meaning it is not funny.

PLOT AND FORM

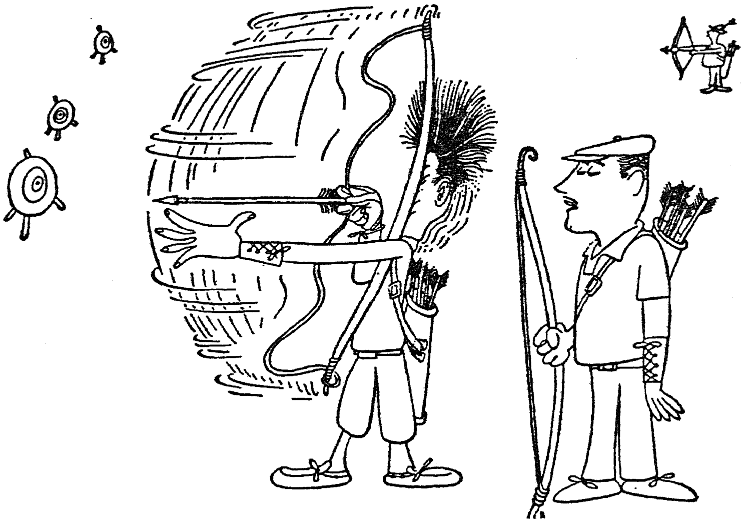
The comic form has a logic of its own. Comedy is drama told in comedy terms; and the terms of comedy are the comic style: comic action and comic reaction. In comedy the straight man represents reality, the comedian represents the departure from reality. Comedy must be based on reality; how can you know what is incongruous if you don't know what is congruous?

Comedy is born of conflict and a sense of the outrageous. In low comedy we know the protagonist is not able to contend with either the circumstances of his environment or with the heavy. The comic hero is outweighed by the villain, and everything is stacked against him. In comedy the protagonist always finds a fortuitous solution to his problems, and all's well that ends well.

The plot for a slapstick comedy need be no more than a simple line on which a lot of gags can be strung. What is a simple plot line? A character setting out to do something like painting a house or erecting a television aerial or repairing a tire and then being overwhelmed by ridiculous obstacles, complications and calamities. Many animated-cartoon comedies start from a premise as elementary as a fox trying to get the grapes from the vine or a cat trying to catch a mouse or a bird. The fun comes out of the gag inventions and comic business devised for the characters as they inexorably pursue their objectives.

Comedy routines and sequences do not necessarily require a lot of planning and preliminary working-out of business on paper, they will often grow spontaneously out of the shooting session. Many of the funny comedies turned out during the era of silent films were the result of a cameraman, a director, a comedian and a small cast of actors going out to some location that offered good possibilities for action, setting up the camera, placing the comedian in a situation with the girl and the villain, or getting him involved with an animal, an old car, flypaper, or a prop of some kind, and then seeing what comic business could be devised on the spot.

The early Charlie Chaplin comedies got their laughs from the energetic and violent knockabout and chases created by this method of improvisation. Consider the comic possibilities suggested by the locales, situations and occupations used in those early Chaplin films: comic byplay in a park over the disputed ownership of an umbrella; an impromptu picture shot in a dance hall; two rivals struggling over a girl on a building construction project; a boardinghouse; a hot-dog stand at the auto races; a boxing dummy that is mistaken by a drunken husband as his rival; a dentist's office; getting involved with a fire hose backstage in a theater; a chase in a movie studio; a drunk in a sinking boat; an office janitor; at work in a bakery—with all that sticky dough and all those custard pies; working as a piano mover; as a fighter; having trouble with an old Model T Ford; working as a paper hanger; as a janitor in a bank; as a floorwalker; a fireman; a bogus count; an immigrant; a deck hand on board ship; an escaped convict; business on a roller-skating rink; and finally, of course, as the immortal tramp.



"No, no! Hold on to the bow *and release the string!"*

A slapstick gag developed by reversing a normal action and pointing it up by an understatement.

Improvisation on the spot is still one of the best ways to make a comedy. Start with a character, a funny character if possible, then find a locale that has possibilities for comedy. Provide your character with a prop, then around the character and the prop create a situation that can be gagged for laughs. The story plot will grow out of the comedy sequences. The situations and business will suggest the necessary beginning and ending.

The plots of the old Mack Sennett comedies were frequently a burlesque of the serious dramas and melodramas of the time. The comedy characters were grotesque, and the plots, often lifted intact from the straight dramas, were played for low comedy.

THE CAPACITY FOR LAUGHTER

If you have a gag mind that delights in wacky humor, exploit it for all it's worth. Gags are fun to do, but gags are also the most transient of the many forms of humor. Gags do not characterize and they do not advance the plot; their only function in a story is to provide laughs.

Incidentally, if you happen to read home-movie articles that present simplified pretested recipes for sure laughs, be wary—there's no such thing as a sure laugh. If you use the recipe, use it only as a stimulus and see if you can't improvise fresh business that will make the end result something of your own. Professional comedy writers and gagmen actually do get many of their ideas by pulling a switch on an old gag or an old comedy routine. They take the basic mechanics of a gag and switch the characters or place the gag in a different locale or they do a variation on the comedy business using different props. One basic comedy situation can lend itself to innumerable variations, as witness the countless twists and angles that have been worked on the man-and-woman-alone-on-a-desert-island gag.

If your cinematic observations tend toward a warm sentimental humor, cultivate this flair that is particularly your own. Humor and sentiment have always proven an effective combination.

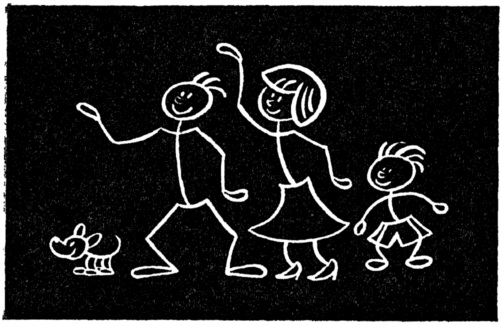
Keep an eye out for unconscious humor—the unexpected incident that turns out to be funny: sometimes it's the result of a misunderstanding, or an error, or a take in which someone goofs. It's a good source of amusing material for the amateur (the professional may often make just as many funny errors, but the curse of being a professional is that you have a status to maintain—the myth of infallibility—and you must never admit your errors or let them be seen by the public). One amateur movie maker on his first day's shooting turned his movie camera on its side in order to get a long vertical picture as he would with a still camera. The projected result was a laugh at the movie maker's expense—a funny scene with a novel twist.

High comedy and satire may operate on various levels of understanding simultaneously. *Gulliver's Travels*, for instance, can be read as a children's story, as an imaginative adventure story, as a satire on the human race. If a probing satirical turn of mind keeps nudging you over into investigating the stupidities inherent in many of our conventions, then start poking around with the lens of your camera and see what turns up. Before you attempt to satirize an idea, convention or institution, make sure that you understand the thing that you're going to satirize, otherwise the attempted satire may wind up sounding and looking like a half-baked adolescent gesture of protest. This same need for understanding makes satire difficult for an audience to accept, because an audience cannot appreciate the pointed humor in a satire unless that audience is thoroughly familiar with the subject being satirized and is also in rapport with the point of view expressed. Everything has its humor, but not everyone sees it.

Humor has wide range and latitude: it appeals to many minds at many different levels. The essence of great humor is love; but to some people humor is the witty or satirical observation that provides them with an intellectual divertissement and a still smile; to many others humor means the uninhibited laughter brought about by a slapstick smartly wrapped across a clown's bottom.

Above all, humor is a reflection and distillation of your deepest thinking told with a smile.

The storyboard technique for developing visual ideas



7

Continuity of movement is the unique compositional element the motion picture possesses over the other forms of graphic art. When properly used this tool can outweigh, in terms of effective story telling, any other element of the picture.

—WILL CONNELL

The storyboard technique for developing movie scenarios, picture stories for magazines and continuities for television shows and commercials is simply a method of translating ideas into visual terms, of formulating your thinking in sketches instead of words, then pinning up the ideas in sequence on a storyboard.

The storyboard technique, sometimes called pre-production design, is a method of pre-editing a movie before it is photographed.

The storyboard, in appearance very much like an extended comic strip, is a way of proving whether or not your ideas can be expressed visually.

A lack of drawing ability is not the problem it may at first seem to be in making up a storyboard; when you have an idea to express, whether you have the ability to draw or not, you will find a way of expressing it in graphic terms.

In so specialized a field as animated-cartoon production most of the writers and story men are of necessity also skilled sketch artists who illustrate their own storyboards. Actually, everyone can draw a little, but most people are too self-conscious to try—they feel that if they can't render a lifelike imitation of nature they just can't draw, and that's that.

As a child you expressed yourself and your reactions to the world around you in drawing long before you learned to read or write. And you stopped drawing when you became inhibited by the unintelligent comparisons made by adults between the fresh naïveté of a child's drawing and the dull, stodgy reality as it exists in the vision of the grown-up.

The sketches on a storyboard are not important as pictures or drawings. They are graphic notes and they are valid only as a means of communicating ideas. They give you an opportunity to appraise the effectiveness of your visual presentation. They help pin down your thinking; they act as a ratchet to keep your mind from slipping back or going round in circles. The completed storyboard becomes a graphic script, a chart of the story in action.

PICTURES AND PINS

A variation on the storyboard technique was used years ago by stage producer–playwright David Belasco. Belasco wrote or dictated copious notes; some were kept in large baskets within easy reach of his chair and others were pinned up on nearby screens. It is reported that he would go to work with a pair of scissors and a box of pins, cutting out speeches and scenes from the various acts and pinning them to the velvet dressing jacket he wore. Then he would construct his play by transposing the clippings on the storyboard screens into a new dramatic pattern which he would strengthen and clarify by writing and pinning up new dialogue and new scenes.

The technique of sketching action as a form of pre-production planning for a live-action film was first applied in 1929 when William Cameron Menzies designed the production of *Bulldog Drummond* for United Artists. This was the first attempt in Hollywood to completely pre-edit a picture, and Menzies proved that in spite of the fact that the movies had just found their voice the visual presentation of the story was still the most important factor in making a good movie.

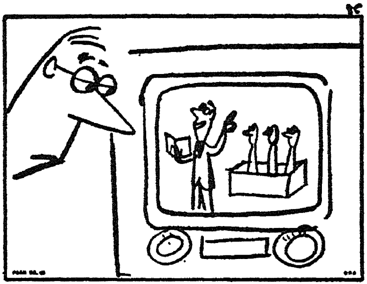
After doing the pre-production planning on such outstanding films as *Gone with the Wind, Kitty Foyle, Our Town, King's Row,* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* Menzies was made director of the film *Address Unknown.* Maintaining that the picture was really made on his drawing board, Menzies said, "The whole secret of motion-picture making is in preparation."

Discussing the value of the contribution made by production designer Menzies, photographer Will Connell wrote, "This pre-editing not only gives the director a clarified and articulated vision of the story-in-picture, but also hands him full and *considered* control of the picture-in-motion, his ultimate aim."

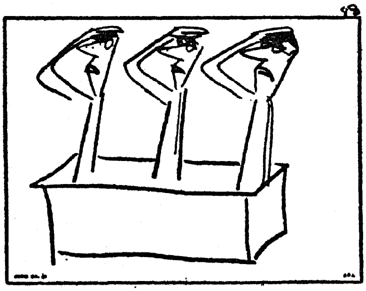
The storyboard technique as it is used today was developed and carried to a high degree of proficiency in the Walt Disney Studio, where it is still used in preference to the written scenario. The technique has proved adaptable to such diversified subjects as the animated-cartoon comedies, wartime educational and propaganda films, picture stories, feature-length films, and, more recently, television programming.

The method was born of necessity. Animated-cartoon production is very costly per foot as compared to live-

One of the author's storyboards for the story of Sappy Homiens. The film was produced for the American Cancer Society by UPA Pictures, Inc.

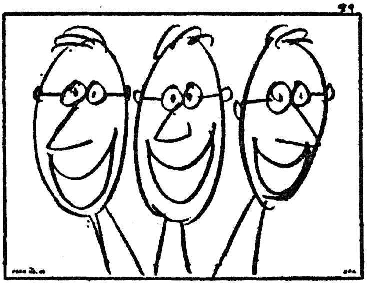


ANNCR: LISTEN---



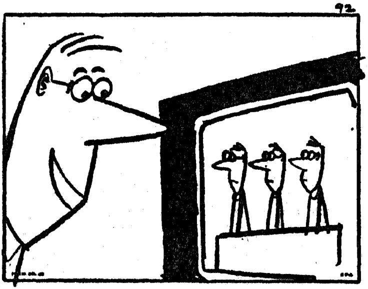
PANEL: (SONG):

-OR IF YOU'RE FEELING QUEERLY--

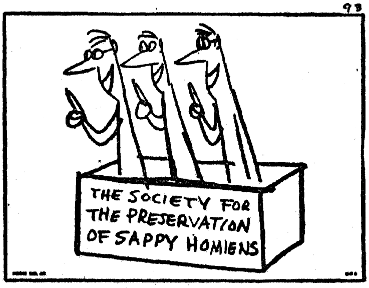


PANEL (SONG):

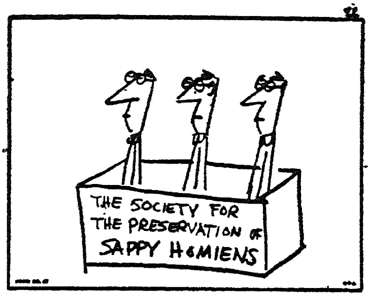
-IF IT'S LIVING YOU WANT MOST--

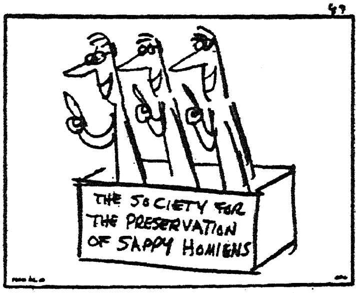


SAP: VERY GOOD ADVICE— BUT NOT FOR ME--I FEEL GREAT!


THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SAPPY HOMIENS

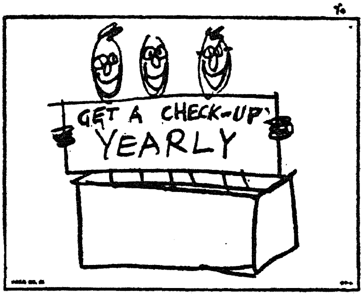
PANEL (JUMPS UP)(STARTS REPEAT OF SONG): IF YOU'RE FEELING VERY GOOD--


THE SOCIETY FOR
THE PRESERVATION OF
SAPPY HOMIENS


89
THE SOCIETY FOR
THE PRESERVATION
OF SAPPY HOMIENS

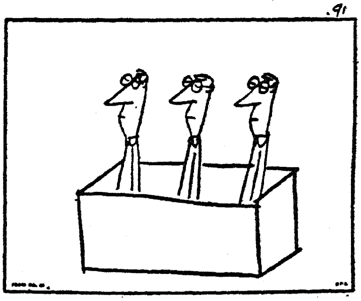
PANEL: (TRIO SINGS TO TUNE
OF 'POP GOES THE
WEASEL):

IF YOU'RE FEELING
VERY GOOD...

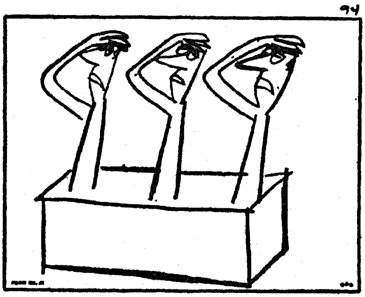

90
GET A CHECK-UP
YEARLY

PANEL (SONG):

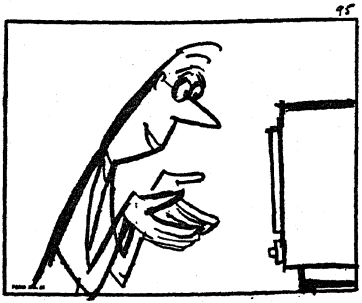
GET A CHECK-UP
YEARLY!



PANEL SITS DOWN

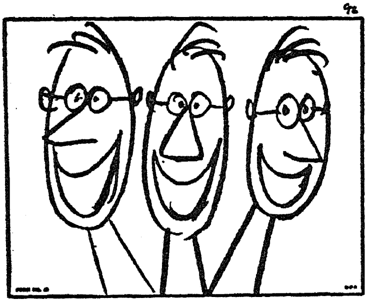


PANEL (SONG): OR IF YOU'RE
FEELING QUEERLY...



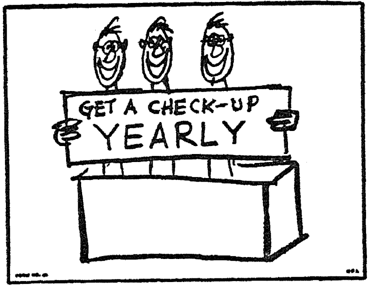
SAP (INTERRUPTING) - BUT
I DON'T.. I FEEL...

98



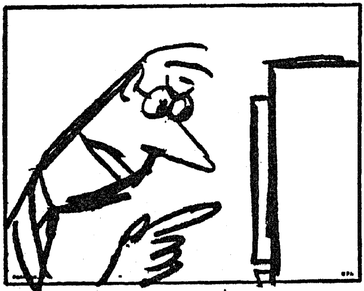
PANEL (CONTINUING SONG):
IF IT'S LIVING YOU
WANT MOST ---

99


GET A CHECK-UP
YEARLY

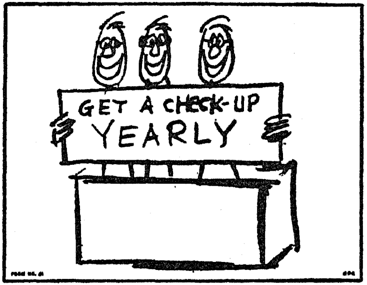
PANEL (SONG) GET A
CHECK-UP YEARLY!

100



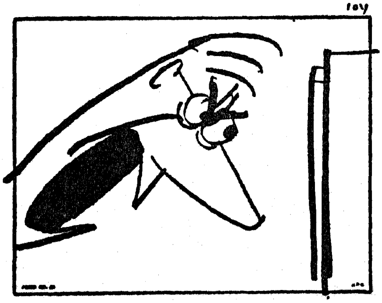
SAP (GETTING IRRITATED):
NOW STOP IT,
YOU GUYS ---

101


GET A CHECK-UP
YEARLY

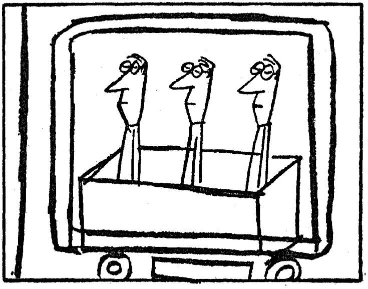
PANEL (SONG):
GET A CHECK-UP YEARLY!

104



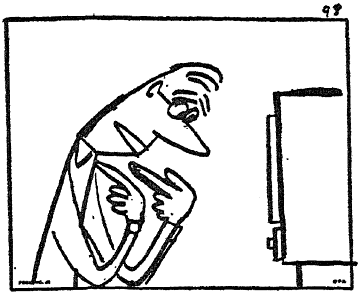
SAP (SHOUTS): STOP!

105



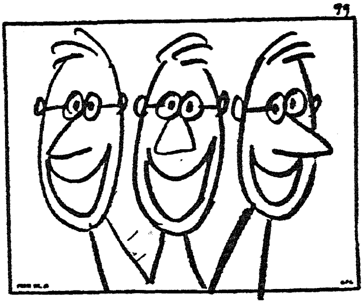
(BRIEF SILENCE)

98



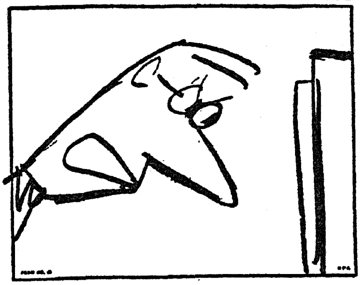
SAP: -BUT THERE'S NOTHING
WRONG WITH ME!

99

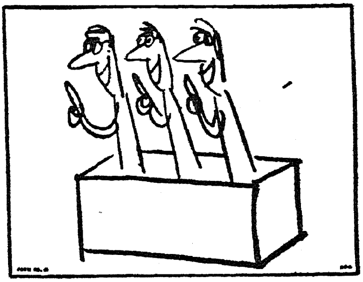


PANEL (INTO SONG AGAIN-
FASTER TEMPO)
IF IT'S LIVING YOU
WANT MOST---

102

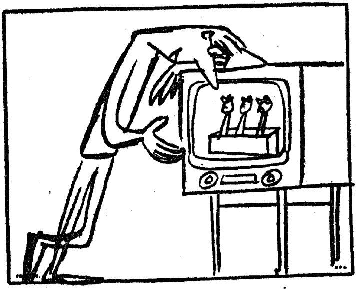


SAP: BUT I HAVEN'T
EVEN GOT---



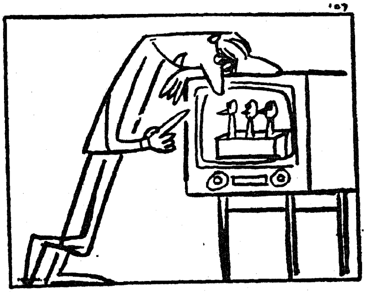
PANEL (SONG-VERY FAST)
IF YOU'RE FEELING
VERY GOOD---

106



SAP: (CALM REASONING):
NOW, LISTEN, FELLAS--

107



SAP: -I HAVEN'T GOT
ONE SINGLE SYMPTOM
OF ANYTHING---

action. The studio couldn't afford the luxury of animating and photographing hundreds of feet of film and then trying to decide whether or not it was any good and, if it was any good, whether it would fit into the picture. A decision had to be made about each scene before it went into production, and the best way to determine the value of the various scenes was to visualize them in context in the completed picture. This could be accomplished most successfully by depicting the entire story in sketch form.

At first storyboard sketches were drawn very roughly. They had just enough drawing in them to put over the idea. Later it was found that different types of stories required different techniques of rendering and presentation. For a story or sequence in which pictorial beauty and mood are to predominate, the studio will assign a highly skilled artist to work with the writer so that the finished storyboards will convey as accurately as possible the quality of the completed picture. If the picture is to be one in which gags and broad comedy are predominant, then almost any kind of rough sketches which successfully convey the ideas are acceptable. The final layout and staging of the picture and the niceties of presentation are left to the director and his production designer.

IDEAS INTO PICTURES

As a movie maker, a photographer, or a writer for television, a large part of your craft requires the ability to think in terms of pictures, to visualize. Although you have been exposed to pictures all your life, much of your education has been communicated through words. Words are symbols for thoughts and objects, but they are not universal symbols; they vary with the different languages. Pictures are a universal language; they can be understood by everyone.

The storyboard is an excellent device for developing the ability to think in terms of pictures. It helps delineate those vague, nebulous thoughts, to put them into a form in which they may be examined and evaluated clearly and objectively. If a thought can be projected articulately in a series of sketches, it is proof that it can be handled photographically.

Another value of the storyboard becomes apparent when a number of people are to be involved in a production. It becomes imperative that everyone—director, cameraman, actors and production people—have a clear idea of the story. Words are open to various interpretations, but a picture is specific. Everyone concerned can see what is intended, and the relative merits can then be discussed. The story in its entirety is spread out before the group; ideas can be transposed merely by switching drawings around on the board; in this way the comparative effectiveness of specific sequences and ideas in various contexts may be tested and appraised.

The patterns used in developing ideas for movie scenarios, picture stories and television scripts are basically similar. When you first start work on an idea, make use of the spontaneity and enthusiasm that accompany the early stages of exploration on a new project. Your subconscious mind will effusively pour forth all kinds of idea germs—good, bad, indifferent. Get them all down without any attempt at editing, continuity or characterization.

Don't concern yourself about putting down a story in chronological order; on a storyboard you start where the ideas are. At first explore each idea fully, without regard for the over-all story. Then, as other ideas are added, developed and modified, the story will go through an evolutionary growth.

After a sufficient amount of raw story material is amassed you begin to shape it, to give it form. You ask questions: What am I trying to prove? And to whom? What is my premise? What is my theme? In a commercial, what is the platform of the sales campaign? Your answers will indicate the direction in which the story must ultimately develop. This direction imposes a pattern on the accumulated material, it is the unifying factor that establishes the line of the narrative.

SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

One of the important characteristics of the storyboard is that it makes feasible the conference method of story development. Other minds can be brought into play. Ideas are subjected to critical analysis. Divergent viewpoints and conflicting opinions are kicked about, and in the process new thoughts are stimulated. There is a further refinement and elaboration of ideas. Gradually, as the story takes on form and unity, the entire structure of ideas and words and pictures is welded into a coherent whole.

Storyboards have been used by *Look* magazine to develop and test their picture stories. Visual pre-production planning does not hamper or restrict the photographer, it merely indicates the pictures necessary to cover the story idea adequately.

Some form of pre-production planning is now standard operating procedure with most of the live-action film-producing companies. Producer-director Stanley Kramer, a strong advocate of pre-production design, has found the procedure sound not only artistically but financially. From his first independent production, *The Champion*, through his recent production of *Not As a Stranger*, which covers some seventeen films, Kramer and his production designer Rudolph Sternad have clearly established the value and importance of this kind of planning.

"The purpose of the drawings," says Sternad, "is to sketch out a movie as it will appear on film, capturing the scope of the writer's narrative, the director's style of staging, and the art director's conception of the sets. In essence, we produce a picture in the rough, supplying a model on which additions, modifications and alterations may be made with little effort and at insignificant cost."

The advantage found by Kramer in using this procedure is that many of the details of staging, composition and lighting can be worked out in advance. As the picture moves into production each individual on the set will have a visual acquaintance with what is expected. This results in saving time and money without destroying any of the opportunities for dramatic expression.

A more recent application of storyboards is in the development of television commercials, both animation and live-action. Because of the limited amount of time at the disposal of the sponsor-advertiser (TV spots run in segments of either ten seconds, twenty seconds, or one minute) every frame of film must be utilized for maximum graphic impact in delivering the sponsor's message.

Because so many people are involved in the development and production of an idea for a TV commercial, and because so many people must be in on the discussions and story meetings and production meetings pertaining to the idea, and because all parties concerned must be in complete agreement on the TV spot before final approval for production will be given, it becomes imperative that everyone in the act have a clear picture of precisely what will appear on the screen before a foot of film is shot.

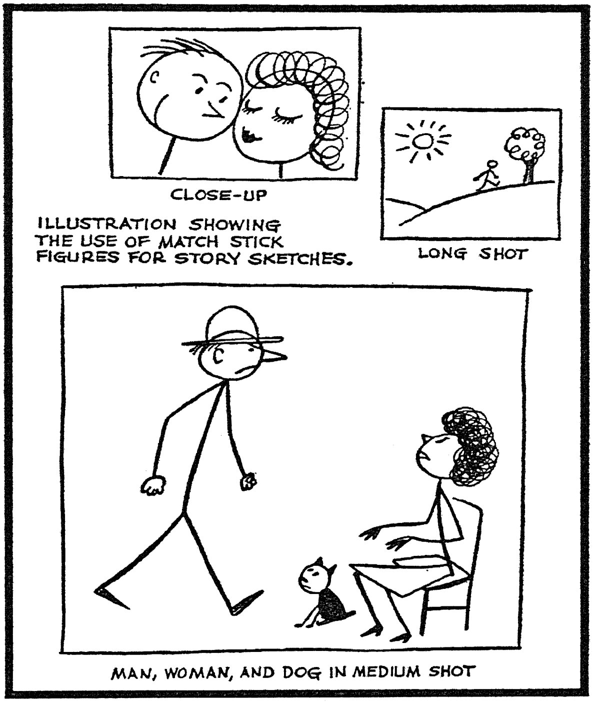
To reduce to a minimum the margin for misunderstanding between the various participating parties a completely detailed storyboard is made. The board is then photostatted and copies are sent to the advertising agency, to the sponsor, and to the producing company for study, discussion and approval.

ABOUT DRAWING

Now back to the problem of drawing. There are many ways of illustrating the things you want to say.

Doodle or matchstick figures can be articulated easily enough to express compositional setups and action.

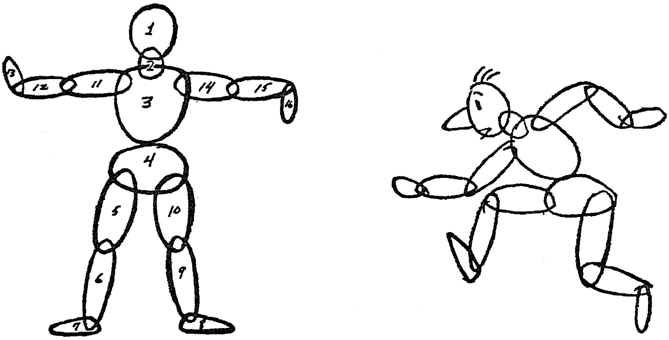
For figures that will more closely approximate human proportions and anatomy you can use the sixteen-loop figure shown in the illustration. The sixteen loops represent the sixteen main articulations in the human body, excluding the fingers.


CLOSE-UP
ILLUSTRATION SHOWING THE USE OF MATCH STICK FIGURES FOR STORY SKETCHES.
LONG SHOT
MAN, WOMAN, AND DOG IN MEDIUM SHOT

Simple figures indicate a variety of emotions as well as movement and action.

Where the utmost in simplicity is desired you can use diagrammatic visual symbols such as arrows to indicate the direction of the light or a path of action, squares to indicate the camera positions, and circles to denote people and their positions in the setup.

If you want to indicate a certain light effect, it isn't necessary to make an accurate rendering in light and shade—simply find a photograph or drawing in a magazine that illustrates the desired effect and pin it on your board. I once saw a storyboard on the history of transportation in which almost half the illustrations were cut-out photographs from magazine advertisements.



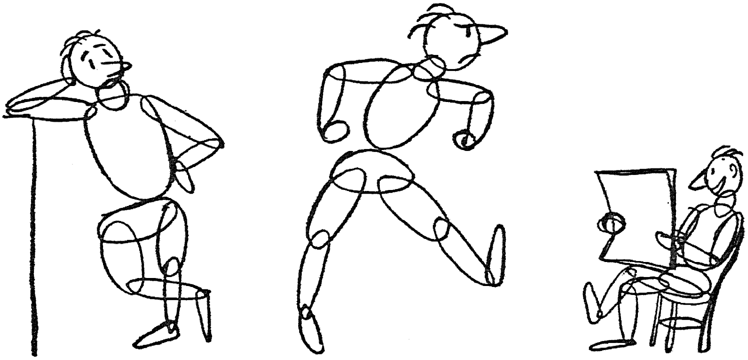
The 16-loop figure and how it can be sketched in various positions

Once you actually get started, once you begin to develop this faculty for thinking in visual terms, you'll discover many ingenious ways to indicate your ideas graphically.

You learn by doing. If you haven't done any drawing since you left kindergarten, it might take you a little while to get accustomed to the idea of doodling around with a pencil or a couple of crayons, but keep in mind that when you were a child, drawing came much more naturally than writing and you did learn to write, so there can't be too many reasons why you shouldn't also learn to express ideas in pictures just as you do in writing.

A few simple fundamentals about the mechanics of drawing might be of some help. Get a drawing board—a well-sanded piece of plywood or a smooth bread board will do nicely. If you want to buy one, a 20-by-25-inch size should be adequate. The advantage in using a drawing board over trying to draw on a flat table is that you can sit back in your chair and tilt the drawing board so the bottom of it rests on your lap, a comfortable position in which to draw.

If you are working by daylight, have the window on



to illustrate a storyboard.

your left side; in artificial light place the light on your left. Reason for this is that your right arm won't cast a shadow over your drawing. If you're left-handed, reverse the directions.

The sketches can be made on any size paper; small sketches are preferable, however, because they take up less storyboard space; also, as a general rule, it's easier to draw small. The two sizes most used by the Disney story-sketch artists are 4 by 5½ inches and 4 by 6 inches. Many of the storyboards for television commercials are drawn on perforated pads specially designed for that purpose. The Tomkins Telepad or the Video Sketch Pad are available at most of the large art-supply stores.

Sketches may be rendered in black-and-white or in color and in any medium you find easy to work in, but never lose sight of the fact that the sketches are not important as drawings, their only function is to convey an idea in visual terms. The most important quality in the rendering of storyboard sketches is readability. The graphic statement, the drawing, should be as clear and as simple in its delineation of an idea as a diagram.

Pencils most used by the studio sketch artists are

Dixon's Charon 790, which is a kind of carbon chalk, and General's Charcoal Pencil; both read very well on a storyboard. For a graphite pencil the Eagle Draughting 5-B also makes a good black line. Incidentally, if you use carbon chalks, charcoal or pastels be sure you fix them with a fixative of some kind or else they'll smear badly in handling.

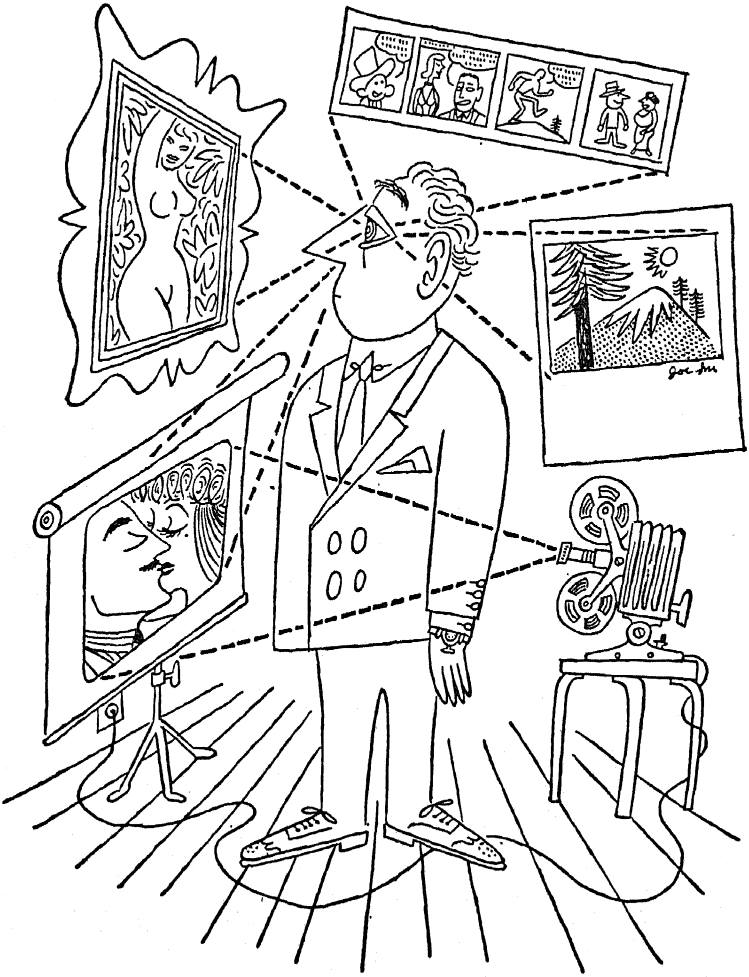
To indicate color a pastel chalk such as Eberhard Faber's Nupastels are easy and fun to use; you can also use crayons, color pencils or water colors.

You'll also need a plastic or kneaded eraser, an art-gum eraser, and a lot of thumbtacks, or, preferably, push-pins.

The storyboard itself is a sheet of Celotex that can be cut to any convenient size; in the studios they are usually about 5 feet by 7 feet with a wood frame around them and hooks so they can be hung on a wall.

If after all this you still insist that you can't draw and you refuse to try but you like the idea of the storyboard as a means of developing film ideas and a method of pre-production planning, get in touch with an artist or an art student interested in exploring the possibilities of the technique with you and go to work as a team.

Developing a picture sense



8

Though the poet is as free to invent as the painter, his fictions do not give so great a satisfaction to men as painting, for though poetry is able to describe forms, actions, and places in words, the painter employs the exact images of the forms and represents them as they are. Now tell me which comes nearer to the actual man: the name of the man or the image of the man: the name of the man changes with change of country; but his form is unchanged except by death.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

A movie is fundamentally a picture play: a narrative, a story or a play conceived and expressed not in words but in pictures. And since pictures are the language through which the movie maker must express himself, an understanding of the various elements that constitute a picture —the graphic values—becomes the grammatical base upon which the film maker constructs his picture stories.

Photographers too often take pictures without seeing. They become so fascinated with the isolated components of a picture that they rarely see the thing as a unified whole. Sometimes it is the quality of light that fascinates the photographer, sometimes it is the character or beauty of the model. Sometimes a compositional device so captivates the photographer's fancy that he allows the spark of life to vanish from his people, leaving them mere models for pictures of apparently lifeless forms.

Movie makers, too, often become so engrossed in the magic of movement that they lose sight of the fact that movement is only one element in a picture composed of many elements. Motion-picture movement takes place within the prescribed space of the film frame. Within that frame it must be related to the other graphic elements in the most effective pictorial arrangement to communicate to the spectator the narrative point of the scene.

That's the reason for composition. But composition as it is usually discussed and written about is encrusted in a lot of dull words, rigid rules and static formulas. There are words and words and words about pictures: words about vertical lines and dignity, words about diagonal lines and movement, words about horizontal lines and peace, words about wavy lines and rhythm, words about visual weight and visual balance, words about symmetry, asymmetry and dynamic symmetry.

The way to learn about pictures is to get away from words and look at pictures. All kinds of pictures: comic strips and cartoons, illustrations, still photographs, television and movies, paintings by the old masters and paintings by contemporaries. Look at them with open eyes and no preconceptions. Enjoy whatever appeals to you visually, don't worry about its value as art.

As you examine and analyze the pictures, see them for what they are, appraise them on their own terms. Don't judge them on the basis of whether or not they conform to the cookie-cutter mold of old compositional clichés.

SEEING PICTURES

You look at pictures all day long, at night you dream in pictures, but do you ever really *see* them?

When you watch television are you aware of the play of images or do you just sit passively watching the story unfold?

The first time you see a good movie it's difficult to do much analyzing, because the director has skillfully used his visual means to tell his story and your interest is focused on what he has to say. If you want to study a movie, sit through it twice; the first time enjoy the story, the second time around you can concentrate on the means used by the director to focus your interest where he wanted it, to command your attention or to distract it from observing certain facts, to build into a laugh or a dramatic climax. Study the staging, note how a character can be made dominant or subordinate by the size and position he occupies on the screen, observe the lighting key and its effect on mood, also notice the patterns of dark and light and how they are used to direct the eye of the observer, and note also the effect of movement in attracting attention.

The graphic arts cover a wide and diverse field, and regardless of the bracket in which you work, an exposure to the other forms of visual expression will give you a better background from which your own individual means of expression can develop.

The good comic strips are an excellent source for a beginning study in the presentation of ideas through pictures. For one thing, the comic artist uses an economy of means. He draws in black-and-white, and whatever shading or modeling he uses must of necessity be done in line, in solid blacks and halftone grays. His presentation and staging are comparatively stark and simple.

When the comic-strip artist has a point to make (whether a dramatic point or the top to a gag) he must get it down in the most direct obvious way. He knows his audience is not interested in puzzling out anything. His readers get his point in a fracton of a second, or they don't get it at all. And if they don't, they just stop reading his strip. Next time you read the comics take a good second look and see how he does it.

Study the picture stories and photo-journalism as skillfully utilized by such picture magazines as *Life* and *Look*. Study the various graphic techniques used on television; observe the differences in shooting and staging between an old movie running on TV and a dramatic show that is being televised live.

A picture sense is invaluable to the movie maker. The labs can compensate for your errors in exposure, but the only person who can do anything about your seeing is you.

STILL PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN AID TO MOVIE MAKERS

The following is in the nature of an informal introduction to still photography as an aid in developing a picture sense.

Almost anything can be analyzed and explained in simple easy-to-digest terms, but knowledge and skill are not acquired easily and without effort. Until you have personally experienced a thing you have nothing more than a superficial knowledge of it.

If you don't own a still camera of some sort you ought to go out and buy or borrow one. A simple box camera is more than adequate to begin with, and you'll find that experimenting and just playing around with it will teach you much about light, exposure, composition and many of the other factors that contribute to the technique of good movie making. In addition, good still photographs can be used as backgrounds for titles, as inserts, for long shots to establish a locale; they can also be used as transitional shots to bridge disconnected sequences.

Why use a still camera instead of a movie camera to do the experiments with? Well, what would be the point in shooting still lifes on movie film? And a short period of intensive experimenting with still-life arrangements will teach you more about composition, which is essentially the arrangement of forms in space, than years of undisciplined movie shooting. Also, aside from the fact that still film is cheaper than movie film, it is easier to study the lighting and composition on still photographs. In trying to study a movie you are constantly distracted from its technique by the narrative and movement—which is as it should be.

AN EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT

The common denominator in every branch of photography is light. All photography depends on light; yet how few photographers will take time off from their snapshooting and their ciné shooting to study the basic laws of light—the effects of light on form (and form can mean anything from the cylindrical shape of a can of beans to a landscape or a human figure). Light can reveal form, it can enhance form, or it can distort or destroy form.

You can prove this to yourself by shooting a series of pictures of one person's face from the same camera angle and the same distance but at different times of day. In the morning you'll have an approximation of a 45-degree light which will throw diagonal shadows across the face; at noon, with the sun directly overhead, the shadows are cast straight down; very late in the afternoon, with the sun quite low, you'll get a side light which throws shadows straight across the face. Study the prints of these shots and you'll see how the shape and size of the nose changes in the different types of light, and also how the basic shape of the face itself seems to change—sometimes enhanced, at other times distorted.

It may help you to understand the effect of light on an object if you think of light as a stream of water striking an object: where it hits the object directly you get the brightest area; a certain amount of the light (like water) passes beyond the object and hits the ground or wall behind and then is reflected or bounced back into the shadow side of the object with a weaker spray, which is called reflected light.

The band of shadow which separates the bright, directly lighted side of the object from the dimly illuminated reflected-light side of the object is called the "core." It is this core of shadow which plays such an important part in creating the illusion that the photographically recorded object on the flat plane of the paper has a dimension of depth as well as height and width.

In lighting a setup, whether a still life or a portrait, forget all the lighting formulas you've memorized and look at your subject as though you had never before seen anything like it. Look for the basic form in your subject, even if it means seeing a human being not as a person but as an abstract form.

This form now becomes the raw material from which you will shape the graphic image to be recorded on film. The next step is to use whatever sources of light you have available to define and accentuate the significant form of the subject or object being photographed.

While doing these experiments with a still camera, try any kind of light setup that pops into your mind regardless of how extreme or irrational it may seem—your prints will be the final proof of whether or not the lighting scheme has any merit. The experience will become a part of your working knowledge, and when you get back to your ciné shooting you will be able to distinguish between good lighting that does its job effectively and unobtrusively and lighting that is merely a novelty effect.

COMPOSING WITH STILLS

Good composition is an effective arrangement of forms in space. Sometimes it is a harmonious arrangement, sometimes purposely dissonant, depending on the story point to be expressed and the visual effect necessary to express it. Composition used with understanding is one of the most potent graphic tools a photographer has for controlling and directing the interest of the spectator.

Composing with a movie camera has to be done at the moment of shooting. You cannot shoot a scene as a still photographer does, then make a contact print of the entire negative, decide how to crop the shot into its most persuasive form, then make an enlargement of the revised composition. In cinematography you must rely upon a cultivated feeling about composition, a feeling that can best be developed by shooting a great many still-photo compositional studies and experiments.

A profitable way to study composition is to make about a half-dozen contact prints or sun proofs from one negative, then with a pair of scissors crop the scene in various ways: in close; at different angles; cut off the top of the scene, or the bottom, or one of the sides—anything and everything until you discover what you would consider the best graphic representation of the scene.

In a still photograph it is easier to study the relationship between figure and background. With a still camera you can experiment with all the different types of movie shots: long shots, medium shots, close-ups and angle shots.

Photograph one setup from different angles and at different times of the day. Observe the effect of various angles on the setup; note the quality of light that gives the most interesting rendering of the scene.

This process of trial and error will build a body of experience which you can then use in filming your movies.

SNAPSHOOTING A SEQUENCE

As a project to develop the habit of thinking in sequence instead of single shots you might plan an entire movie reel by shooting all your scenes first in a series of still photographs, then pin them up on a storyboard and study them to see how effectively they tell the story. Would a longer shot have been more revealing than the one you have to establish your locale? Would a closer shot help emphasize the specific point you are trying to make? Crop the print and see. What would happen if you transposed some of the sequences? Would it make your story clearer or would it destroy the continuity?

SNAPSHOTS AND STORY DEVELOPMENT

Snapshots are not only helpful in developing a storyboard treatment, they also provide visual notes: records of locations, people, places and costumes.

If there is something unusual about a character you see, something that attracts, repels, disturbs, amuses or interests you, photograph him. A face in a snapshot can sometimes suggest an entire characterization.

A Hollywood screen writer who began taking snapshots because his wife had given him a camera for Christmas found that the camera could play a valuable part in the development of his screenplays. Assigned to do a screen treatment of a crime story, the writer wanted to get an authentic feel of the locale and atmosphere of a police station. He went to the Los Angeles Police Headquarters and spent a number of days taking snapshots and making notes. He photographed detectives, fingerprinting setups, police files, the radio-patrol broadcasting room and all the details and locations that might play a part in the story. The result was that the finished motion picture had the kind of authenticity generally associated with a documentary film.

As an outgrowth of this experience the writer now uses his still camera as a notebook. A number of his snapshots have suggested screenplay ideas. For example, a dramatic snapshot of an Italian boy spending a summer on an American farm acted as a kickoff for an idea about an Italian boy brought to America to play a movie role. The story was concerned with the problem of the boy's falling in love with America and then being forced to return to his native land.

The ensuing screenplay grew out of incidents and characters originally recorded in snapshots. The snapshot records were subsequently utilized in developing the character sketches, and ultimately some of the snapshots were translated into scenes in the actual movie.

A still camera used in this way provides a visual record for the writer and also acts as a stimulus to the imagination.

If you're at all curious about the processing and printing of film it would be enlightening for you to develop and print a few rolls of your own snapshots. It's a simple procedure that can be done with a few inexpensive pieces of equipment. For further information on the matter (and many other ideas pertaining to still photography) see

How to Make Good Pictures, published by Eastman Kodak Company.

These experiments with a still camera can play an integral part in your learning to use the language of pictures. You experiment with different ways of making graphic statements; as you become more familiar with the tools and grammar of your craft you begin to appreciate how flexible is the medium you are working in and how much is possible when you have acquired an adequate control over its technique.

Part Three / Production

The chief danger threatening the moving-picture creators . . . throughout the world is the high cost of production and the fear of risk to the important investment of producers. It robs the creator of full usage of all those contrasts, of the experiments and of those daring and wonderful mistakes that permit the triumph of art over matter by the breaking down of rigid habits that are stultifying.

—JEAN COCTEAU

Directing a movie

9

A good film director does not permit the spectator to look at the scene at random. He leads our eye inexorably from detail to detail . . . placing his emphasis where he sees fit, and thus not only shows but at the same time interprets the picture.

—BÉLA BALÁZS

If you own a movie camera and can promote the price of a roll of film you're in business. You, Limited or Incorporated, depending on how many people had to chip in on the cost of the film.

You are now a motion-picture producer. You will probably also be your own director, cinematographer, writer, editor, actor and general handyman. This is good; it puts you in the tradition of many of today's top-ranking directors who learned their business in the early days of the silent movies when the industry was made up mainly of one-man operations.

In those days the director was the key figure in the creation of a movie; when he needed a story he either wrote it himself or took the idea from a book or play. He usually made the adaptation scene by scene as he shot the film.

He was also his own casting director, which meant that he wandered about the streets in search of types, and when he found them he placed them in front of a camera and taught them to act. He was location manager and technical expert. He improvised methods of lighting and learned to compensate for poor film quality with accentuated make-up. Most important of all, through trial and error he began to evolve a technique that would fully utilize the story-telling potential of the movie camera.

After the picture was shot, the director cut and edited it; from inception to completion it never left his hands. The result was a reflection of the director's taste, his thinking and his ability. And good or bad, it was his baby.

Charlie Chaplin, an old hand at one-man productions, not only starred in his pictures, he produced them, directed them and collaborated in the writing of them. He controlled all the elements of production; he merged and unified method and content, and the results were great films.

When the movies developed into a big business, control over the film was dissipated into the hands of producers and associate producers who represented the money interests, the backers. The arrival of sound brought about a divorcement between director and writer. The new writers brought in to develop screenplays for the talkies were, more often than not, playwrights: men who had learned to tell stories in dialogue rather than in pictures. Directors had less of a hand in the development of the screen stories, and in many of the large studios the director had been relegated to a position of middleman between script and screen. In many instances the director was called in after the script was finished, and though he could make changes and contribute touches during the filming, his job was largely to coordinate the efforts of a cast of skilled experts.

The situation has been corrected to some extent by a recent trend in Hollywood toward independent production. Many professional directors, actors, writers and producers have formed independent companies in an effort to regain the kind of artistic freedom enjoyed by the earlier one-man operations. They want the right to choose stories and to have a voice in the creative decisions that determine the quality of the films in which they are involved. By increasing their autonomy the artists may achieve a greater degree of integrity, but beyond this, individualized picture making is not practicable in Hollywood. The professional film maker is caught up in a business which demands of each film an unqualified success at the box office.

Production costs are now so high and so much money is at stake that every facet of movie making has developed its own crew of highly trained specialists. Mistakes are minimized and the possibilities of a failure are reduced. On the other hand, however, young film makers need a standard other than financial success; they should be allowed the possibility of failure—many failures, if necessary. It is the only way an artist can develop.

A lack of money and a lack of equipment imposes limitations on the amateur but, paradoxically, there is an advantage in this. Limitations are just as important to an artist as freedom. Within these imposed limitations the artist may explore, experiment and improvise with complete freedom.

THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

What is the role of the director in the making of a film? To what extent is he responsible for the final result? What is his contribution to the film?

"The director," says Leo Rosten in *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers,* "takes the script, actors, cameraman and technicians and directs them in the literal meaning of the word, fusing the parts into a single pattern with a point, a purpose and a central theme. He controls the pace and rhythm, the overtones and meaning of the screenplay. There is a world of difference between a mimeographed screenplay and a movie. The movie writer creates a story, but the movie director creates a motion picture."

A director in the fullest sense of the word is also part producer, part writer. He will have a voice in the choice of subject matter, a voice in casting the film. Often he will collaborate with the writer in the construction and preparation of the screenplay.

A movie is a cooperative venture, and for a venture involving so many talents and collaborators to succeed there must be one person whose artistic personality will dominate the production. Someone has to make the decisions: decisions regarding technical problems, decisions regarding artistic problems.

Another aspect of the director's job, perhaps one of the most difficult, is concerned with handling people: those behind the camera as well as those in front of it. The quality of the completed film will depend to a considerable degree on the director's ability to get actors and technicians to comply with his demands. Let me expand this a little. Most problems that arise in the course of making a film involve questions of taste and, more often than not, the solution is a matter of opinion. The director must make decisions based on his evaluation of the diverse opinions of the heterogeneous groups that comprise a film unit. There are the artists and creative people whose opinions are determined largely by their egos and their intuition, there are the technicians whose opinions are bounded on all sides by dials, meters, knobs and indicators, and then there are the accountants whose opinions are predicated on how much it will cost and whether the picture is in the black or in the red.

After opinions are considered and a decision made, the director must reconcile the opposing factions to his point of view. To get people to work together as a unit requires sympathy and understanding. Some people need encouragement, some need restraining, some can take direct criticism and some can accept criticism only if it is concealed with flattery. All these people make a contribution to the film, and their collective efforts must be coordinated and directed toward a clearly defined objective.

A good director learns his trade by working at every phase of it. A knowledge of story, of the use of the camera, and of editing forms the keystone of the basic technique of movie making.

Philosophically the director must be open-minded, receptive to ideas. The way he feels about the world around him will determine his choice of subject matter and the manner in which he treats it.

A director must have a sense of theater, a sense of taste, and an intuitive feeling for audience. Intuitively he should be able to feel if a scene is truthful, if it is playing or not, if the characters ring true. If it feels right to him, then it is right. Chaplin, writing in *The Adelphi* in 1924, said, "I prefer my own taste as a truer expression of what the public wants of me than anything that I can fathom out of the things that I observe either in my own work or in that of others who are unmistakably successful.

"I have heard directors, scenario writers, and others who are directly concerned with the shape that the motion picture shall take, argue under the shadow of this great fear of the public. They begin with a good idea, then they lose courage and deceive themselves. The consciousness of what the public will want is for them so terrifying. If they do something that is a little different because they have forgotten while filming the episode that there is such a thing as an audience, they are in doubt about it when they stop to consider. It is difficult to consider the public secondarily, but unless the person making the picture can achieve that state, there will be no originality in his work."

Or, as Elia Kazan put it, "Honey, you can only go by your own opinion in this life. You start using someone else's thinking—you're a gone goose."

PERSONAL MOVIE MAKING

Personal movie making today is completely in the hands of the amateur: the guy who makes movies with his own money for the personal pleasure and fun he gets out of it. Which brings us back to you. You've got the camera and the film, and now you want to know more about how to direct a movie. Fine. How do you learn to direct? By directing. By trying to put on film the things that interest you, the things you see and feel. Only as an amateur are you completely on your own. Only as an amateur are you free to make the kind of films you want to make—within the restrictions imposed by a lack of unlimited capital.

SUBJECT MATTER AND STORY

The essential factor to consider in choosing a subject for your movie is personal interest. The content of your films should have importance to you, and by focusing on everyday material instead of searching for the exceptional you will have a good chance to catch something real on film, something original.

If it's to be a home-movie record, the basis of your continuity will develop during the actual filming. If you're going to do a documentary you should first decide on your theme. The theme states the premise for your film. Premise, as defined by Webster, is a proposition antecedently supposed or proved; a basis of argument. A proposition stated or assumed as leading to a conclusion. The theme states the point you wish to make on the subject of your film; it creates the frame of reference for what you shoot and how you shoot it.

If you wish to make a fiction film, a comedy or drama depicting the actions and reactions of human beings trying to resolve a fictional problem, you'll need a story. In choosing the subject for your story take into account the limitations of budget, the availability of acting talent and shooting locations. If you live in a farming community, don't write a drama about the slums of a big city. If you know someone who is a natural comedian, build a story around him; don't try to fit him into a photoplay of passion and violence. Get the most from what you've got.

After the story idea is worked out, either in your mind or on paper, break it down into a list of scenes. This will be your shooting script. It doesn't have to be anything more than an outline to remind you of the general continuity and the story points to be covered in the various scenes. If you're interested in making an illustrated storyboard to supplement the script or to supplant it, this would be the time to do it.

A professional shooting script is a comprehensive blueprint for the production; it carries instructions for the director, actors, cameramen, technicians and all the other participants.

On the following page is an example of the form used in professional shooting scripts.

Note that all pertinent information is given: the shot number, how you get in and out of scenes (for description of terms: fade, cut, wipe, dissolve, see Chapter 10), type of shot, interior or exterior, day or night, location, what camera does, who is in the shot and what he does and says.

In the middle of all this talk about story and script and screenplay let me reiterate an important point. Story alone does not make a movie; graphics alone do not make a movie. The film form is a fusion of literary art, of graphic art and the theater. A film maker with an understanding of these forms has a decided advantage. For example, consider the advantage of concentrating the functions of writer and director in one man. The writer as director knows the values in the script, knows what it is that the

FADE IN

1. MED. LONG SHOT - EXT. - DAY - CITY HALL BLDG.

CAMERA TRAVELS DOWNWARD as Title is superimposed over bldg.

TITLE
In this monument to law and order

we find that etc., etc., etc.

DISSOLVE

2. MED. FULL SHOT - INT. - NITE - JOE'S OFFICE - JOE, TED.

JOE comes through door wearing business clothes and carrying hat.

CAMERA PANS HIM to TED who is seated. TED looks up with grave concern.

TED
What happened?

3. CLOSE SHOT - JOE

He looks fearful.

JOE
We're in trouble. Bad trouble.

4. CLOSE TWO SHOT - JOE AND TED

ANGLE favors TED. He picks up knifelike letter opener and considers it for a moment.

TED
I don't think there's gonna be
any trouble....

TED taps letter opener significantly.

WIPE TO:

5. EXT. WAREHOUSE - NITE - MED. SHOT - POLICEMAN (DOLLY SHOT)

CAMERA moves with POLICEMAN as he makes his rounds. He stops suddenly. As he looks off, CUT TO:

6. MED. CLOSE SHOT - WAREHOUSE WINDOW - CAT

CAT in broken window pauses momentarily then scrambles to ground and runs off.

writer is trying to project on the screen. The director as writer knows how to write the kind of material that will play, that will make for good visual story telling.

Okay. You have a script. What next? Get familiar with it. Live with it, think it, talk it, make notes on its production. Almost any story will admit to a variety of interpretations. What does this story you intend to shoot mean to you? What is the essential theme or idea that the story deals with? What is its intent?

A director does not take a script at its face value; his objective is to discover the dramatic purpose of the story. Stage director Harold Clurman in an article on direction describes the influence of the director's concept upon the material he directs. Clurman writes: "In *I Am a Camera,* the dramatist tells of a girl who lives a rather disordered life in a hectic, almost diseased environment. On the stage, the play's effect is amusing and even charming. This may be due to the delightful personality of the leading player. But it is probable that even the same player might produce a more disturbing or at least more humanly complex impression if the director had chosen to make a different point." Clurman concludes: "The actors have a great deal to do with the play's immediate physical and emotional impact on us; the director is largely responsible for the intention and significance of the total event."

Key or style in production is achieved through choice: any character, any speech, any piece of business, any scene can be played in any of a number of ways—comic, straight or heavy. You as director must ferret out, must dig through to, the essential quality of the story and catch this quality that would characterize it in a few words, a label or a phrase. The purpose of this method is to find the key that will provide a basis for the acting style, for the design of the production, and for the production itself; it will also provide the clue to whatever rewriting may have to be done to tighten the shooting script.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STAGE AND SCREEN

Before proceeding with production let's digress for a moment and consider some of the differences between directing a stage play and directing a movie. On the stage you work within the confines of the proscenium arch, your audience at a fixed distance from stage and actors. In a film the audience is escorted all over the place, its view of the unfolding story is fluid and constantly changing; it shifts imperceptibly from a bird's-eye view of a locale to a worm's-eye view of an action to a microscopic examination of a significant detail.

When Frank Capra was preparing the film version of a prize-winning stage play he pointed out some of the basic differences between stage and film. "The theater and the picture are two different mediums," said Mr. Capra. "The unreality of the stage is its magic. Actors and audience accept and enjoy this unreality or this atmosphere of illusion and make-believe. A stage audience knows that a stage tree is a prop. It knows that doors, windows, moons, kitchens, etc., are not real. This acceptance of limitations often spills over into a tolerance of the actors and their characterizations. Even staid old grandmothers accept the most horrible dirty words without batting an eye. And if, within this magical atmosphere of illusion, the playwright and actors can stir the mind and heart (no easy trick) stage audiences are gratified.

"But pictures have no such limitations. A tree must be a tree. A door is a door. And, most important of all, a character must smack of reality. Although I'm no expert on this, it does appear to me that weakness in story, construction or characterization shows up more clearly in a film than a stage play. If this premise is right, it accounts for a great deal of the difficulty in translating a play into a film."

CASTING THE FILM

You may be able to cast the entire picture with your family and friends, or you may want to use a Little Theater Group; or it might be fun to form a movie-making equivalent of a Little Theater Organization to work exclusively in film.

In casting the roles in a fiction film with inexperienced actors, look for types who create the images of the characters. Then, in order to clarify the role, rehearse a number of different people for the same part. Give each of them the freedom to improvise an action with which they are familiar, then choose the best from the various improvisations and incorporate the business into the final conception of the role.

The technique of using nonprofessionals in films is as old as picture making. If possible, use several experienced people to carry your story and non-pros for all the secondary and extra parts. Sergei Eisenstein, one of the first of the great directors to use nonprofessionals in major film roles, says: "I do not pick my actors from the profession. . . . They do not act roles. They simply are their natural selves. I get them to repeat before the camera just what they would have done in reality. They are hardly conscious of any artificiality, of any make-believe. . . ." This is the clue to obtaining acting performances from people who have never before been in front of a movie camera. Give them the barest necessary hints and give them things to do that are natural for them. Put a car mechanic to work on a car, use a painter painting—allow people who are not professional actors to do what comes naturally to them and you'll get natural responses and natural actions.

If you are going to work with a group of nonprofessionals this would be a good time to have a get-together with everyone who is to take part in the production. Let them in on the story, the production problems, everything. If they know and understand what is going on they are more apt to help share the responsibilities. It's the only way a cooperative venture can succeed.

ACTORS AND REHEARSALS

In shooting a fiction film it is advisable if possible to have a complete rehearsal of the story before any shooting is done. This will give the director the opportunity to previsualize his scenes and shots, to look for storytelling details, and to set the mood or key in which the story will be played.

In the first rehearsal go through the script with the actors, then let the actors go through it easy, without attempting to give a performance. Give the actors an opportunity to work with each other. Help them to understand the flavor of the story you intend to get on film. You must keep in mind a clear conception not only of the individual scenes but also of the larger outlines of the film in its entirety. Character relationships must be established in the early sections of the film to prepare the audience for whatever shall come to pass later.

Be aware of pace in your scenes, know the high spots of each scene, know which business can be played swiftly and which business must be played slowly. If scenes lack pace, perhaps some cutting is necessary. If some of the scenes do not seem to play, perhaps a conference with the writer can help uncover the source of trouble.

"Only geniuses can tell you exactly what is wrong with a scene," said Bernard Shaw, "though plenty of people can tell you that there is something wrong with it. So make a note of their dissatisfaction; but be very careful how you adopt their cure if they prescribe one. For instance, if they say a scene is too slow (meaning that it bores them), the remedy in nine cases out of ten is for the actors to go slower and bring out the meaning better by contrasts of tone and speed."

It isn't necessary for the director to tell the actor how to play a scene. Give him a sense of the scene to indicate the action or the mood and then allow him to improvise, to get inside the character he is portraying. In this way he can evolve a valid interpretation of a role through his own reactions to the specific story situation. In the creation of a role it will help the actor to examine his own experience, to observe people around him, how they move, how they act, how they react. Whatever business you suggest to the actor must feel right to him. When you give advice, be concrete and specific. Don't burden and confuse him with abstract concepts.

In working with actors, director Fred Zinnemann says, "The main thing is to work out relationships with the actors, to establish a feeling of mutual trust. . . . I feel the better you know an actor, the better the performance you get out of him. I never like to impose my own concept of a scene on actors. I want them to do it themselves, rather than tell them, step by step, word by word, where to stand and how to look. After I get the initial approach from the actor, I can manipulate. But the basic thing must come from the actor."

The value of rehearsing an entire script before you start filming is discussed by Elia Kazan, who has been directing films with the same sure technique he has demonstrated as a director in the theater. According to Kazan, "The rehearsal process in the movies can be as creative as it is in the theater. You can allow unexpected, interesting things to happen that you find very usable. It's well not to be too prepared. Know exactly the action and the effect you want in a scene and let the actors work it out. Then, when you have what you want, shoot it. Acting in pictures is more demanding than on the stage. The camera penetrates like a microscope. It's better to do nothing than the wrong things and so most film actors do nothing (and get away with it). Because of the mercilessness of the camera the best film actors are the innocents —animals and children."

In the final analysis the director who wishes to create a fiction film that is something more than photographed actors must have the ability to draw the kind of performances he wants out of his actors. Sometimes he may have to suggest bits of business and occasional gestures, at other times he may have to yell, threaten, goad, beg or inspire them into giving a performance that represents, to some degree, what the author had in mind when he wrote the story.

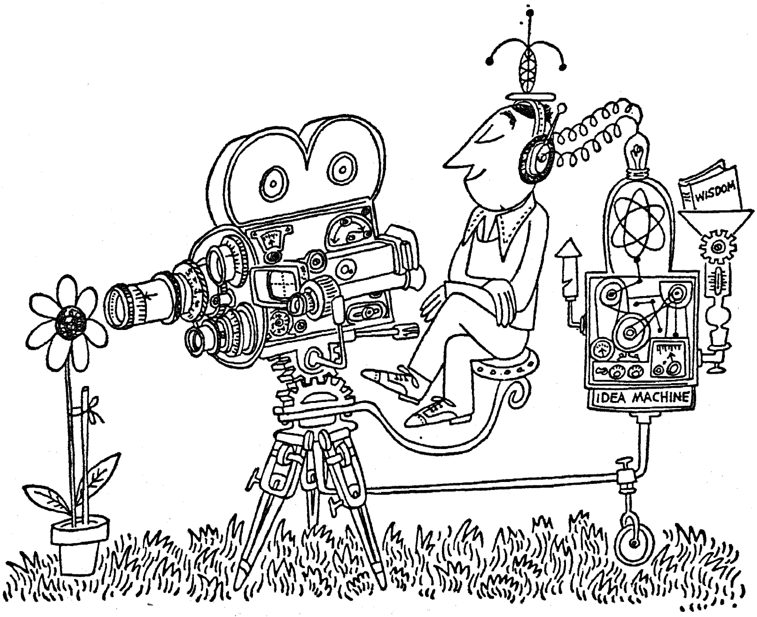
For more on actors and rehearsals there is an excellent pamphlet on "The Art of Rehearsal" by Bernard Shaw which may be obtained through play publishers Samuel French at 25 West 45th Street, New York 36, New York, or 7623 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood 46, California.

When the director has finished transcribing words and ideas into moving images, the resulting film may be an accurate visual translation of what he, or whoever wrote the story, said; it may reveal things in the story the author never realized were there; or it may even result in the film's achieving effects diametrically opposed to anything suggested by the original story.

What sort of film the director ends up with depends on his ability to make clear his intention. The director deals with intangibles; he operates almost exclusively in the area of opinion and his decisions are determined by his intent. The director must appraise each problem as it arises, evaluate the pros and cons, and arrive at a decision. Often this must be done in haste—and with conviction.

If the director succeeds in integrating the various elements of production into a coherent film, and if, in making his decisions, he guesses right more often than he guesses wrong, his coherent film may even turn out to be an interesting film. If, on the other hand, he makes too many wrong guesses he winds up with an incoherent film and, consequently, a dull one. He will, however, have acquired experience, and if he learns from that experience, well—there's always the next film.

The camera as a story-telling instrument


WISDOM
IDEA MACHINE

10

There is only one real idea in picture making and that is that they're pictures before they're anything else.... The camera is the most exciting part of the medium for me.

—TONY MANN

The camera should be like a fountain pen which anyone may use to translate his soul onto paper.

—JEAN COCTEAU

A movie is what is on film; no camera, no movie.

The camera is the instrument through which the movie maker communicates with his audience. The camera is employed to direct the spectator's attention, to establish atmosphere, to build dramatic tension, to reveal the emotional overtones of a situation, to revel in the nonsense of comedy. The action, ideas and emotions of a story can be diffused or intensified through the choice of camera angles and by the quality of light through which they are seen.

The versatility of the modern movie camera is made possible by various controls and accessories. The camera can be operated from a stationary position or it can be moved about on camera cranes, dollies, booms, automobiles, trains, planes or anything that's available. The camera speeds make it possible to photograph a scene in normal motion, in slow motion, in accelerated motion or by single-frame exposures for time-lapse photography. The lenses enable you to show a scene from a normal angle of vision, from a wide angle or through a telephoto. You can also contract-expand images to CinemaScopic proportions through the recently perfected anamorphic lenses. You can show the scenes sharply or diffused or through a shifting focus. And you have filters to correct or distort color and tonal relationships.

LENS AND IMAGE

The photographic image is controlled by the lens of the camera, and our primary concern with the lens will be in terms of its expressive function. The normal-focal-length lens is something of an all-round lens capable of handling most photographic situations. The wide-angle lens allows you to show a larger area than would be possible using a normal lens from the same distance, but it has a tendency to foreshorten perspective and also to exaggerate relative sizes. When the camera is placed very close to the subject the foreshortening is exaggerated out of all proportion to reality. A normal-size room photographed with a wide-angle lens will appear twice as large as normal, and the distance between figures in perspective in such a scene will be greatly increased. The telephoto lens used from the same distance as the normal lens brings the subject closer, giving you a larger image on the film frame, but it has little depth of field and tends to produce a very shallow perspective.

A good way to learn about the various lenses and the purposes for which they were designed is to make a movie limiting yourself to the use of a normal-focal-length lens. Sooner or later you will find yourself backed up against a wall while shooting a scene in which there is a fairly large group seated around a fairly large table in a fairly small room; the only thing that will enable you to back up far enough to include the entire group is a wide-angle lens. Or suppose you find yourself photographing a scene in which you have a significant object in the foreground which must be dramatically related to a figure in the middle distance or background of the same shot; the only lens with enough depth of field to hold all the objects from extreme foreground to distant background in sharp focus is the wide-angle. If the next shot calls for a close-up of a wild animal (even in the zoo) the solution is a telephoto lens. Once you have a clear idea of what you want on film you shouldn't have any difficulty deciding on the correct lens for the purpose.

The story you wish to tell dictates where the camera shall rove and what it shall observe. Allow the story to dictate, but do not let it become dictatorial. Improvise during the shooting: allow the camera to exercise its creative powers, to see the accidentals, to discover interesting details.

STORY INTO FILM

To translate a story into the film idiom requires an understanding of the limitations as well as the resources of the movie camera. Let's examine the camera now, not as a photographic instrument but rather as a story-telling instrument.

The camera is a machine; it cannot think, it cannot feel, it cannot select or evaluate; it simply records whatever takes place before it. It can record a scene of great emotional intensity, but it doesn't follow that the film record of such a scene will move a spectator to react with like feeling and intensity. A spectator's empathy has to be wooed and won; his first reaction to most events in which he is not an active particpant is one of indifference. The objective is to take him in, to make him care. This is accomplished by acquainting the spectator with the characters in your story and arousing his interest in them; then as his interest grows he'll begin to feel a sense of identification with them: their problem will also become his problem. Once he becomes emotionally involved he will respond emotionally to the situation in which the characters find themselves.

Before the camera can respond to people and events with a living awareness it must acquire a kind of humanity, it must become a part of you. You are the story teller, and the camera—as an extension of your eye—tells the story as you see it. When the spectator views the film he sees the story through your eyes. If you have seen clearly, the spectator sees clearly. If you haven't, he misses the point. On the screen a scene is there, then it's gone, and the spectator can't wind back the reel to check over something he didn't understand.

Now, part of the technique of moving the spectator is the use of connotative imagery, images and action that are loaded with meanings that have extension beyond the literal. Let me explain. The first conception of a story is generally verbal, and these words have to be translated into pictures, pictures that are not empty illustrations of the words but pictures with a life and vitality more or less independent of the words from which they sprang. The verbal ideas are translated through human action sometimes combined with meaningful props to project a visual re-creation of the original idea.

It's difficult to put on film abstract ideas such as love or hate or anxiety or happiness. These complex feelings must be reduced to recognizable patterns of action. We recognize the presence of an emotion by its outward manifestation: the clenched fist of anger, the tears of sorrow, the wringing hands of anxiety, the stooped shoulders of defeat, the light step of happiness, the shyness of love.

In addition to the use of human actions there are also many objects which have gained extension in meaning through literary allusion and through repeated association with certain ideas. These symbolic objects form a visual shorthand language that makes it possible to represent abstract and highly complex ideas in simple visual terms. We are all familiar with the more obvious of these: a flag is symbolic of a nation; it represents what that nation stands for. The famous 1945 Pulitzer Prize-winning news photograph by Joe Rosenthal which shows the American flag dramatically being raised atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima by a group of U.S. Marines is more than a photograph of a flag raising, it is symbolic of the victory of one set of principles over an opposing set.

From a practical point of view it would be impossible in a film to delve very deeply into the essential differences that drive two nations into armed conflict. Film makers then resort to the other extreme. They take the simple way out by reducing a highly complex social, political and economic situation to a battle between the good guys (our side), and the bad guys (the opposing side). On film it works like this: A character, or group of characters, representing the forces of villainy, pull down our flag. A close-up shot of a newspaper headline declares we have been attacked. This is followed by a sequence of shots showing a roll of drums, a poster proclaiming "Your Country Needs You!," a blare of bugles, and the battle is on.

Other familiar symbols are the balance scales which represent justice, the Statue of Liberty, which is symbolic of the American concept of democracy, and the scepter and crown as emblems of authority.

Animals and nature are also used to depict human feelings, attitudes and conditions. We associate the dove with peace and love, the lion with might, the fox with treachery, the pig with sloth, the snake with evil, the vulture with death and the eagle with courage and freedom. We associate happiness with sunlight, sorrow with darkness, dawn suggests a beginning, nightfall an end. Spring brings hope; winter, despair. A storm in nature can externalize an emotional storm within, while the rainbow that follows indicates all's well that ends well.

There are many commonplace objects we associate intimately with the daily routine of living, and these can be utilized effectively in appropriate stories. Consider, for example, the succession of rings and ring-shapes with which we are concerned in the process of growing up; we go from the teething ring to ring-around-a-rosy to the ring on the merry-go-round to the ring around the wheel of an automobile to the wedding ring to the big fat responsibility of an overloaded key ring.

Images, light and dark, movement—these are the elements that create visual interest in a film; and a film should have pictorial beauty as well as story interest.

COMPOSITION IN MOVEMENT

The problem of composition in motion pictures is closely related to the problem in still photography (as well as to the problem in drawing and painting): the object is to direct the eye of the observer. This can be done in both mediums by the arrangement of the forms and shapes within the picture area, and also by tonal control; the eye will always go to the area of greatest contrast. The essential difference in composition between motion pictures and still photography is the element of movement. A moving picture is dynamic, and its composition is predicated on the control of forms in movement.

Forms can be moved across the screen on a horizontal line, a vertical line, a diagonal or a curve. The forms can move from distant background into immediate foreground or from foreground into distance; as they move in space they change position and size and as they do they also change in relative importance within the film frame. Since it is characteristic of the eye to follow a moving object, all movement within the film frame must be organized to direct the eye of the observer to the area of greatest interest.

The movie maker selects and directs all the elements that go into each shot: people, props, lighting and movement. All the elements within a shot must work together to convey a specific meaning; before you make a shot consider the function of the shot in relation to the film as a whole.

THE UNFETTERED CAMERA

In the early days of movie making the action was photographed with the camera in a stationary position, much as you might photograph a play by placing the camera in a central location in the auditorium and recording the action that takes place on the stage. With a growing understanding of the possibilities of film story telling and the development of editing concepts and techniques the camera was able to break loose from its fixed position and move right into the middle of the action. It moved in not only as an interested spectator but sometimes as an active participant.

The camera used with perception is capable of establishing a point of view; it can, as it shows a close-up of a man's face, say to the spectator, "This character is a man worth rooting for; look at that wide-open face, that friendly smile"; or, as it shows another face, "This character is up to no good, look at the shifty eyes and that lean and hungry look"; or, as it shows us a burning fuse, "Look out! The whole thing's about to blow up!" The close-up commands attention; it intensifies an emotion, an action, an idea; it helps to build tension.

Whenever you place the camera at an unusual angle you provoke in the spectator a feeling of strangeness. Acute camera angles give a distorted appearance to familiar objects; they produce that shock of recognition that comes from seeing a familiar face or object from an unfamiliar point of view. A scene shot with the camera tilted at an angle to the vertical axis of the picture could indicate a state of emotional instability, an upset equilibrium, or the way things look to a drunk. The camera looking down on a person can make him appear small, insignificant and pitiable, while the camera looking up at the same person can give him the heroic stature of a superior being.

MOVIES AND MOVEMENT

A good movie tells its story more to the eye than to the ear, and movement is the essence of the film form. It was the phenomenon of reproducing live movement that first attracted people to the old nickelodeons to look at movies; and the fact that the word "movie" is still used to designate a motion picture is proof of the hold that this aspect of films has on the imagination of people.

A movie literally consists of a number of kinds of movement: first, there is the actual movement of the images on the screen in any single shot; secondly, there is the movement provided by the camera as it pans, trucks, tilts and travels about; thirdly, there is the movement of the images shifting from shot to shot as a result of editing the various shots into a story pattern. Because the spectator's attention is held within the tight confines of the film frame any movement within that frame assumes an exaggerated importance; movements placed within the film frame must be carefully chosen for their expressiveness. False gestures and meaningless movement can destroy a feeling or mood as effectively as a broken splice.

Speed of movement may be controlled or altered by the use of the camera speeds. If you shoot with a normal camera speed of 16 frames per second for silent pictures and 24 frames per second for sound films you get an approximation of normal movement. If you shoot with a camera speed of 8 or 12 frames per second you double the speed at which figures move about the screen. Accelerated action and slow motion can help in expressing a subjective feeling. Perhaps you feel strongly about the traffic situation in your city. You feel that people drive too fast and too recklessly, and you want to say so on film. You shoot scenes of traffic at 8 or 6 frames per second and the cars appear to go twice as fast, the stops and starts at signals are twice as abrupt, the near-misses miss by narrower margins and the whole episode becomes alarming, which expresses the way you feel about the traffic situation. Suppose, on the other hand, you were to do a story about a character in a hurry to reach a destination, and suppose a great deal depended on whether or not he reached that destination in time. On his way he gets caught in a heavy traffic jam. The entire sequence could be shot in slow motion to externalize the man's feelings.

Accelerated action is a natural for shooting comedy sequences because it gives you that silly kind of staccato movement that was so funny in the old-time silent comedies. Psychologically it has another advantage in comedy: it takes the hurt out of slapstick by dehumanizing the characters, by making them appear almost like mechanical toys with no feelings.

Eerie dreamlike effects are one of the obvious results of filming an action in slow motion, but it can also be used to increase the lyrical qualities of a dance as well as to emphasize grace of movement in other actions.

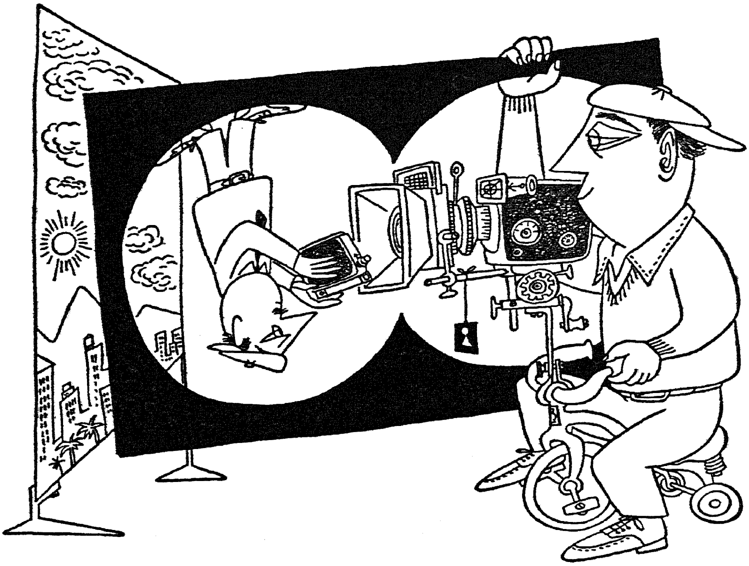
To bring on a storm in a hurry, shoot single frame exposures with a short time lapse between each exposure of the gathering clouds obliterating the sun.

Movement gains by contrast. A fast-moving object appears to move faster if contrasted with a static object. If you've had a series of scenes in which there was an abundance of action, follow it with a scene in which there is little action or no action at all.

GADGETS AND EFFECTS

Gadgets satisfy the urge to collect, and I suppose we're all collectors at heart. Actually you can make good movies with a simple camera, without gadgets; but the accessory gadgets increase a camera's versatility. Gadgets are often precursors of what eventually becomes standard equipment. Speedometers were once accessories on automobiles; so were windshield wipers, gas and oil gauges, four-wheel brakes, shock absorbers and peneumatic tires.

Webster defines the gadget as a contrivance, object, or device for doing something. It can be a jewel-like contrivance of spun aluminum and polished glass assembled by skilled craftsmen and purchased by you at a handsome price, or it can be a thing made out of a couple of old film spools, a lens from a ten-cent pair of spectacles, some Scotch tape, piano wire and glue. It doesn't matter which, as long as it performs the job for which it was designed.



Here are some of the more commonly used movie effects, the purpose or function they serve, and the gadgets or devices necessary to accomplish them.

FADES AND CROSS-DISSOLVES

At the beginning of a movie we fade into the opening title, and after completion of the movie we fade out following the end title. Do not use fades on any of your other titles unless you're using subtitles and you wish to denote a long passage of time. Professional movies use a short cross-dissolve between the credit titles. These are done with optical printers at film-processing laboratories, and for the amateur to try to duplicate this effect by hand takes more effort than it's worth. A simple cut between titles will suffice.

In terms of film syntax a fade would be comparable to the lowering of the curtain at the completion of an act. A cross-dissolve corresponds roughly with the completion of a paragraph in writing. A wipe indicates that while one thing is taking place here—wipe—look what's taking place simultaneously over there. A cut is comparable to the shifting attention of the human eye as it appraises a scene.

The simplest way to make a fade is to gradually close down the diaphragm of the lens; however, this will not work well if you are shooting in bright daylight because you will already have the lens closed down to around f/8 for color, and f/11 or f/16 for black-and-white. One or two stops' underexposure on black-and-white film will hardly be noticeable, and even on color film it is not enough underexposure to effect a complete fade-out. Today's films have so much latitude that with the cooperation of the processing lab they can almost compensate for that difference in exposure. After closing the diaphragm all the way down clap your hand over the lens. It's a little abrupt but it will black out the scene. This closing down of the diaphragm for a fade-out is practicable while shooting in poor light because then the amount of underexposure greatly exceeds the latitude of the film.

There are manual as well as mechanically operated fader gadgets that can be attached to the lens mount. There is a fading glass, a rectangular-shaped piece of optical glass clear at one end and graduated to complete opacity at the other end. There aren't any on the market as far as I know, but your camera dealer may be able to order one from a filter manufacturer who would then make it up on order. Chemical fades can be made with an inexpensive Fotofade kit made by Craig, Incorporated, a division of the Kalart Company.

To make a cross-dissolve, photograph a scene up to the point at which you want the dissolve to begin, then fade out. Next, wind back the film to the frame at which the fade-out was started and on this frame start fading in the following scene. This can be done quite easily with an 8mm magazine-loading camera. After fading out the first scene stop the camera, make a note of the exact amount of footage used for the fade-out, then turn over the magazine in the camera and with the lens covered run the camera for the same amount of footage used to make the first fade-out; this action winds back the film. Now turn back the magazine to its original position in the camera and shoot the next scene (the scene into which we are dissolving) by fading it in for the same amount of footage it took to fade out the first scene. Don't forget to set the footage indicator back to allow for the overlap in the cross-dissolve.

LENS ATTACHMENTS

Lenses still come under the category of things for which there are no do-it-yourself kits. However, there are inexpensive ways of increasing the scope and flexibility of your lens.

Filters make possible an increased control over light conditions; they can control intensity, reflections and haze; they can correct or distort tonal values and alter colors. Supplementary lenses make available to you a wider selection of image sizes and they can also provide you with varying degrees of diffusion.

A yellow K2 filter used with panchromatic film will darken a blue sky and bring out the white clouds. A red "A" filter will make the sky go very dark and give a dramatic contrast to the scene. You can obtain a night effect while shooting during the daytime by using a red 25A filter. To get a night effect while shooting during the daytime with color film, use a blue filter and expose the film as though you were shooting without a filter; do *not* allow for the filter factor.

Sometimes you'll have a gap in a sequence that requires a big close-up of a hand writing a letter or indicating a point on a map, or a close-up of a foot jamming down on the accelerator in a car, a close-up of a spinning wheel or a screaming headline; these shots are called "inserts." They are usually tight close-ups employed to emphasize a story point. Sometimes they are used for transitions, to show a passage of time or to quickly establish a place. To get big close-ups without a long focal length lens you place a supplementary lens such as the Kodak Portra in front of your normal focal length lens; this permits you to shoot at a closer range than your normal lens will allow.

The ability to get close-ups where you need them is far more urgent in movie making than in still photography. A still photographer can later enlarge any portion of his negative but whatever a movie cameraman shoots is what he gets on the screen. Image size, composition, contrast and diffusion must be controlled during shooting.

THE MATTE BOX

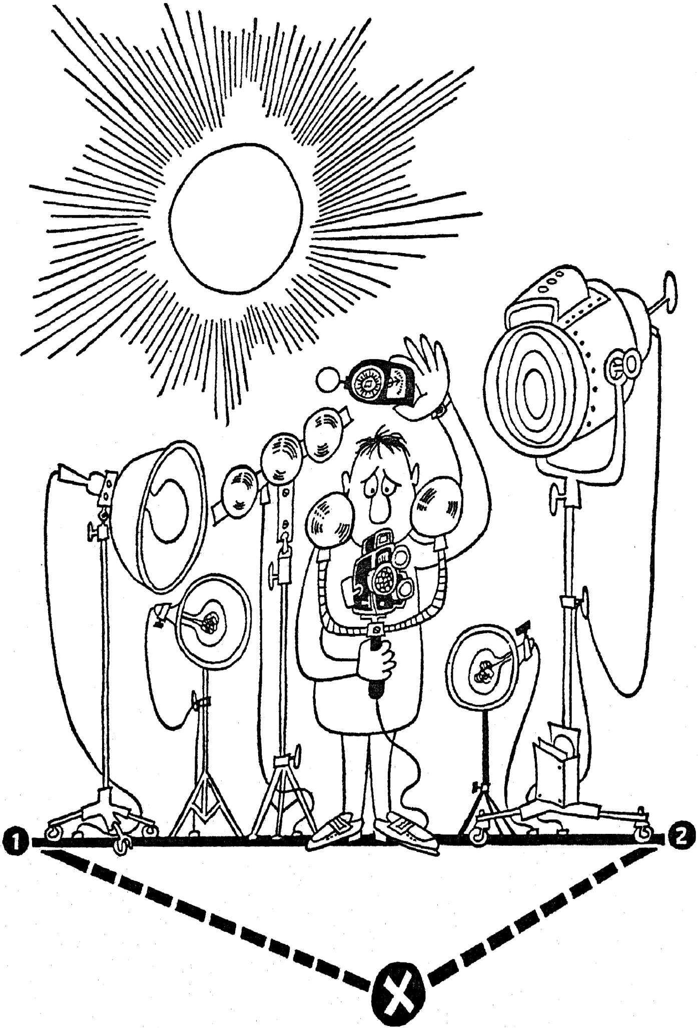
The matte box is literally a boxlike gadget that is placed in front of the lens and is designed to hold filters, gauzes, nets, diffusion disks, and masks. It makes it possible for the movie cameraman to put directly on film what the still photographer accomplishes by manipulation in enlarging, double printing, retouching, and paste-ups.

The gauzes and nets are used to obtain varying degrees of diffusion as well as to hold back detail in certain sections of a scene.

The masks are used to create montage effects in which several scenes are shown simultaneously. They make it possible to expose one portion of the frame while blocking off the light from the rest of the film frame. After the first exposure the film is rewound, the exposed area is covered with a mask and the unexposed film area is unmasked and exposed to another scene. On the screen they are seen simultaneously. The masks can also be used to create the effect of looking through a pair of binoculars, a telescope, a window, a keyhole, or any shape you'd like.

There are an infinite number of other gadgets accessible to movie makers, some useful, some delightful nonsense, and some a plain waste of money. Gadgets rarely supply the substantial stuff of good film making; at times though, they provide some of the frills and fun.

Light and lighting



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In the final knockdown and drag-out, light is the only tool the photographer has. What he does with and in light is himself—his style. All the other things are gadgets, the pieces and parts of his recording apparatus. Mastery of these gadgets is, of course, assumed—or presumed. But being a master of gadgets isn't enough.

—WILL CONNELL

All photography depends on light. The two sources of direct light are the sun and artificial light. We see by reflected light; that is, we see the light from a direct source as it is reflected by the object it strikes. We recognize the shape and form and texture of objects by the light they reflect. When there is an absence of light the objects are still all around us but we cannot see them. Now, just as objects are visible to us only as they reflect light, it follows that if there is a change in the quality or direction of the light there is also a change in the appearance of the object. To restate that, as light changes in direction, in intensity and in quality it produces a change in the appearance of things. And the fact that light can change the appearance of things makes it possible to use light expressively.

The functions of light in movie making are (1) to illuminate the scene, (2) to re-create the appearance of volume on the flat plane of the film, (3) to create an illusion of depth and space, (4) to express emotional mood and atmosphere, (5) to accentuate action, and (6) to control the movement of the spectator's eye within the composition of the film frame.

LIGHT CONTROL

All light is judged by the shadows it casts: black, well-defined shadows indicate a hard light; soft diffused shadows, a soft light. Now, before we get too far into the problems of lighting let's briefly examine the equipment for lighting and for controlling light.

NATURAL LIGHT

A limited control can be exercised over the use of natural light outdoors. The intensity of bright sunlight can be reduced by placing canopies of muslin above the players. These muslin canopies are called "scrims," and they soften the hard light of the sun by diffusing its rays. Reflectors made of silvered or white-painted boards can be used to kick light into the dense shadow areas for a better light balance. And you can intensify a weak outdoor light by the addition of artificial light.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

The two basic types of artificial lights are classified as "spots" and "broads."

Spotlights cast a hard narrow cone of light, and are used to concentrate the light within a confined area. The illumination from a small source of light such as a spot is very contrasty and the shadows are sharp and black.

Floodlights are a broad source of light; they illuminate a large area and they cast a soft light with diffused luminous shadows.

The intensity of artificial lights can be increased by moving them closer to the subject, decreased by moving them farther away. Light intensity can also be controlled by placing diffusion screens made of wire, gelatine or silk in front of the lights.

To prevent light from shining directly into the lens or hitting areas where it is not wanted use "barn doors" or a "gobo." Barn doors look like a couple of metal barn doors which are attached to the front of a spot or flood to mask down the beam of light. A gobo is a screen, usually made of a piece of thin plywood painted black and mounted on a movable stand.

FILTERS

Another method of controlling light, both natural and artificial, is through the use of light filters. This was touched upon in the last chapter in connection with lenses; I repeat it here as one of the tools used in working with light. The various filters designed for different purposes may be roughly classified as (1) correction filters, (2) contrast filters, (3) neutral-density filters.

The correction and contrast filters are used to exercise control over the tonal rendition of subject matter in black-and-white and in color.

Neutral-density filters are used when the intensity of the light is so bright that even with the lens closed down to its smallest aperture it would overexpose the film. Without altering color values the neutral-density filter reduces the amount of light passing through the lens.

Sharp details that may not be desirable can be softened by using a diffusion disk which scatters some of the light transmitted to the film.

A polarizing filter is used to reduce glare and light reflections from water, glass and wood. It can also be used in color photography to darken blue skies.

LIGHT AND VOLUME

The primary purpose of light is to enable us to see, but beyond that the cinematographer must concern himself with volume; he must use light to reveal the volume of forms in space. In learning to use light expressively, it may prove helpful at the start to consider the subjects you intend to photograph as abstract forms. Use the placement and direction of light to delineate the shapes and planes and to model the contours of these forms.

Form is transmitted to film through tonal values, but many photographers do not see the values which create the graphic image of form. These values of varying contrasts, made up of highlights, middle tones and shadows, define the bumps and hollows and textures that identify the subject. It is the photographer's task to clarify and accentuate the values which function for him, which best serve his graphic needs.

THE BASIC LIGHT POSITIONS

Motion-picture lighting setups, with few exceptions, are predicated on three basic light positions; and whether you use three lights or thirty the fundamental principle is the same. The three basic lights are the key light, the fill light, and the back light.

The key light is the dominant light source in the scene, and it is the key light that should throw the shadows. The key light is set first, then the other lights are arranged to supplement and amplify it. The customary procedure is to place the key light in front of the subject, above eye level, and somewhat on an angle to the camera. A strong front light at camera will emphasize contour and detail but it will also destroy any feeling of space in the scene; everything will appear to be on a single flat plane, and everything will appear to have equal importance in the shot because everything receives the same amount of light. If the main source of light is placed below the eye level of the subject it will give the subject a sinister appearance.

The fill light is a secondary light source. It is usually a floodlight placed near the camera position. The job of the fill light is to throw light into the shadows cast by the key light, but it should not throw shadows of its own in conflict with the main source of light. This can be avoided by using a fill light of less intensity than the key light; also, the weaker shadows from the fill light can be washed out by one of the secondary back lights.

The back light is almost always set up high at the back of the subject. This light casts a rim of light around the edges of the subject, which in turn creates a feeling of space around it. It is this light which gives depth to the scene and graphically separates the subject from the background. Some photographers, in lighting a figure, prefer to start their lighting arrangement with this light instead of the front light because it is the high back light which contributes dimension to the photographed figure. For example, when you hit the shoulders with a back light it reveals them as a plane on top of the body instead of a flat shape. A back light used as a key light will emphasize silhouette and minimize detail.

On occasion, perhaps in shooting a low-key scene in which you want mysterious or melodramatic overtones, you'll want to use a cross light. The angle of illumination of this light cuts sharply across the line between camera and subject. It is a harsh light which is usually placed at about eye level with the subject, or sometimes below it, and it emphasizes textures by illuminating the subject in extreme highlight and shadow.

BOUNCE LIGHT

One of the simplest solutions to lighting home movies, especially for record shots of the children and of home activities, is to use the indirect illumination of the bounce light. The bounce light is a light source, generally photofloods, aimed at the ceiling rather than directly at the subject. The reflected light then bounces off the ceiling as it would from a soft reflector and illuminates the subjects in a suffusion of light similar in quality to outdoor light in the open shade.

There are numerous advantages in using bounce light: once you get the lights set you rarely have to move them for different shots; there is greater freedom of movement for the subject because a larger area of the room can be illuminated from the basic setup; because the light is constant only one exposure reading and one setting of the f-stop is necessary; and it's a flattering light that models the features with a handsome delicacy.

The bounce light also has a couple of disadvantages. For one thing, it requires more exposure or more lights or lights of a higher wattage in order to raise the intensity of the illumination to the point where the combination of film and lens opening can cope with it. Another thing, if the ceiling and walls are white or a light neutral color they'll do nicely, but if they are painted in strong colors and you are shooting color film you'll do better with direct light and the proper color filters.

LIGHTING FOR MOOD

For story-telling purposes you are on safe ground if you proceed on the premise that human beings have an instinctive and more or less similar reaction to light and dark. You will notice as you look at a picture with a full tonal range that your eye will seek light and shun shadow. In a full-tonal-scale composition the dark areas will seem to recede, while the light areas will appear to come forward. There is a definite impulse toward light; light is good, dark is evil.

Cinematographer John Arnold has perceptively observed the vital role played by light in evoking an audience response. He says, "Consider a very simple scene: a bedroom in which a sick child lies, while its mother keeps constant vigil. If this scene is presented in somber tones with long, menacing shadows on the screen, you feel at once that the child is gravely ill, and may never recover. If, on the other hand, the room is in lighter tones, with sunlight streaming through the windows and a cheerful sparkle evident everywhere, instinct tells you the crisis has passed, and the child is on the road to recovery."

There must be a continuity of lighting in a movie. Each scene must be lighted in relation to the scenes which precede it as well as to those which follow it. Mr. Arnold points out that although lighting must be governed by the demands of the individual scenes, "There are . . . certain fundamental principles which apply universally.

"The tone or key of the lighting must be closely attuned to the dramatic mood of the scene. In lighting a tragedy, for instance, we would as a rule strive for somber effects, with heavy, foreboding shadows and soft contrasts to match the mood of the action. In a melodrama, we would preserve the low-key lighting, but modify it to give harsh, strong contrasts. For what might be termed normal, everyday action, we would give the lighting a normal, visual key and normal contrasts. For lighter comedy, we would raise the lighting to a higher key, not only to match the brighter action, but to make certain no comic antic passes unseen."

LIGHT AND ACTION

The visual treatment of a scene will often be determined by the tempo or speed of the action that takes place within the scene. The faster an object moves the less time there is to see it on the screen; it is important therefore that fast-moving figures or objects, especially if their scale is small within the film frame, be made clearly visible. This demands brilliance in the lighting, but even in low-key scenes figures or objects can be made to read clearly by using the contrasting highlights and shadows to delineate the center of interest. In slower-moving passages the lighting scheme can be more elaborate and more subtle.

Although lighting is generally considered static it can also be used as an active dramatic element. There is drama in the swift-moving headlights of an automobile, a flashing railroad warning signal, a lone lighted window in a darkened building. The staccato pattern of blinking lights on a telephone switchboard can symbolize feverish activity, the flash of a bulb on a news photographer's camera can indicate notoriety, and a name in lights on a theater marquee has long been synonomous with success.

Light can be used very effectively to dramatize movement. Suppose you are filming a scene in which a group or a line of people are moving directly across the screen. If you light it with a flat light from lights at camera you will illuminate the scene, but it will be lacking in visual interest. However, if the scene is lighted with a strong back light the line of people will cross between the light source and the camera; they will function as interrupting forms and they will create a strong moving pattern of bright lights and black shadows. This dynamic pattern of alternating dark and light not only improves the composition of the scene by making it more exciting graphically, but it also accentuates the movement of the figures.

COMPOSITION AND LIGHTING

In discussing the use of the camera in motion-picture composition it was pointed out that the object of composition is to direct the eye of the observer to the specific area of the film frame in which the most significant action is taking place. The devices for directing the attention of the eye are the arrangement of forms within the film frame, physical movement and tonal contrast. Since we discussed arrangement of forms and movement of forms earlier, let's now consider the use of light in composition.

An object is made to stand out through contrast: light is played against dark, dark against light. In planning to direct the eye of the observer to a specific area of the film frame be guided by the fact that the eye will invariably go first to the area of greatest contrast. This is the area of the picture in which the lightest light value is smack up against the darkest dark. For example, in a portrait the face is lighted brightly while the background is allowed to go quite dark. The area in which the brightly illuminated face coincides with the dark of the background becomes the area of greatest tonal contrast and draws the eye of the observer to the face, which is the center of interest. For further insight into the dramatic use of light and shadow, study the lighting effects in professional motion pictures and plays, and also study the works of great painters who are noted for their skillful use of light and dark—such painters as Vermeer, Titian, Tintoretto, Franz Hals, El Greco, Rubens and Rembrandt.

Before setting lights, make a general plan of the pattern of movement that is to take place in the shot. When the area in which the action is to take place is mapped out, arrange the lights in a setup that will give you an approximation of the lighting you want. Then have the players walk through the action while you study the scene through the camera view finder. The final step is adjusting the placement and balance of the lights in order to achieve the maximum delineation of the mood and action of the scene.

NOTES ON MAKE-UP

The camera is in place, the lights have been set. Before the shooting starts let's take a look at the object of all this attention: our subject.

To enhance the appearance of the players being photographed, and also to aid in modifying and playing down their less desirable features, professional cinematographers have learned to utilize diffusion filters, gauzes, nets, and skillful make-up. Make-up is usually necessary in films intended for professional use because many blemishes and skin defects which are scarcely noticed in actual contact with a person are exaggerated and appear more noticeable when projected on the screen. And since it is impossible to retouch movie film, whatever corrective measures may be required by a person's appearance must be anticipated and compensated for at the time of shooting.

Make-up has two distinct purposes: (1) corrective or (2) character. Corrective make-up is used to cover freckles, blemishes and skin defects, and also to modify the features and contours of the face. Character make-up is used to create a change in the actor's appearance; this is effected by an exaggeration and distortion of his features and also by disguising them.

Character make-up is a subject I have no intention of getting involved in, so let's concern ourselves with learning something about a basic corrective make-up and how to apply it. (Actually, it isn't necessary that you learn to apply make-up, but if you understand a few of the fundamentals of make-up it will enable you to appraise the make-up on others and, when required, to make helpful suggestions.)

THE BASIC MATERIALS OF MAKE-UP

A rubberized apron or smock should be provided to protect the subject's clothing while applying the make-up. A towel should be pinned over the subject's head to prevent powder from getting into the hair.

Cold cream or cleansing cream is used to cleanse the skin before the make-up is put on, and afterward it is used to remove the make-up.

Grease paint or liquid make-up is used as the foundation or basic complexion for the skin. There are many shades, ranging from a pale pink to very dark reds and browns.

Lining colors are grease paints in strong solid colors that are used for eye shadow, for accentuating desirable features, and for correcting others.

Moist rouge is used in place of lipstick and is applied with a brush. Rouge in a dry form is useful for retouching the make-up after it has been powdered.

Eyebrow pencils are used on the eyes and eyebrows. They are medium-hard grease paints in pencil form, and they come in brown, black, red and blue.

Mascara is used to accentuate the eyelashes.

Brushes are used for applying the lining colors.

A powder puff is used for applying powder.

A face-powder brush is used for removing excess powder after it is applied.

Cleansing or facial tissues are used in removing the make-up.

By writing to manufacturers of theatrical make-up, such as the Max Factor Company of Hollywood, California, and the M. Stein Cosmetic Company in New York City, you can obtain a list of their products, the names and numbers by which they identify them, and pamphlets containing hints on the art of make-up.

APPLYING THE MAKE-UP

The following basic make-up is for women, and let's go along with the notion that unless you're a professional make-up man it will be easier for a woman to apply the make-up herself. The ensuing instructions will be addressed directly to her.

The first step is to remove the street make-up with a little cold cream or cleansing cream. Remove the cold cream with facial tissue and then saturate the facial cotton with an astringent lotion and wipe the face thoroughly, making sure all excess oil has been removed.

When putting on make-up keep in mind that dark colors or dark shades recede; they produce the illusion of moving back, of creating recesses and hollows. Light colors and shades function in the opposite way; they move forward, producing the illusion of high areas and raised surfaces.

For a basic make-up the medium-shade liquid make-up cream is used for the neutral or basic skin color. Application: one drop of the medium-shade cream on forehead, nose, chin, neck, and each cheek. Spread evenly with finger tips for complete coverage.

To apply the liquid make-up, make a pallet with one finger on the heavy section of the inside of your hand. Now, by touching your finger tip to the pallet of the dark shade liquid make-up, apply dots of make-up where they are required: the side contours of the face, the sides of the nose, and underneath the jaws. On round or oval-shaped faces the dark shade should be applied fairly close to the nose, which gives the impression of narrowing the frontal plane of the face. On thin faces the dark shade make-up should be applied quite a distance out from the nose, which will tend to widen the frontal plane of the face. The make-up should be gently blended and smoothed with the fingers so that the outside edges of the color show no lines of demarcation. To cover freckles, blemishes and birthmarks apply the dark-shade liquid make-up heavily and blend evenly to desired contour lines.

Now apply the light-shade liquid make-up cream with the finger tip to those areas of the face which need highlighting: over the eyes on the forehead, under the eyes on the cheeks, the bridge of the nose and the tip of the chin. Be sure all areas are carefully blended. The light-shade make-up cream is also used to cover circles under the eyes. When finished, the entire face should be completely covered, the complexion smooth and possessed of a slight sheen.

The eye shadow should now be applied over the eyes to create, in effect, a shadow. A dark-brown eye shadow is recommended. To apply, make a pallet on inside of hand as described earlier. With a clean finger, touch the spot of brown eye shadow and apply to the lid—about one-half inch from the outside edge—along the skin close to eyelash, drawing out and upward with the side of your finger.

If the eyebrows have to be extended, use a brown or black eyebrow pencil, according to your complexion coloring. Do not use pencil to fill in solid, and do not draw a hard, sharp line because this will make the eyebrows look artificial. Draw little short hair lines, or put in a series of dots following the natural shape of the eyebrows. When the eyebrow is extended to the proper length take a small eyebrow brush or clean mascara brush and blend the dots together.

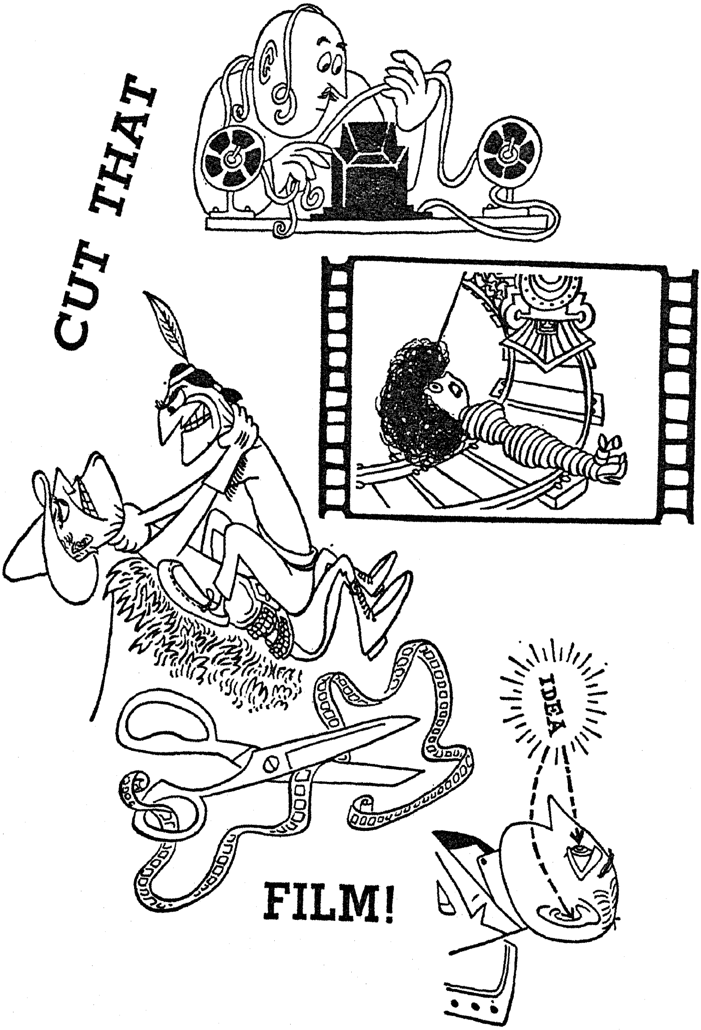
Black mascara is recommended for the eyelashes; it accentuates the eyes and makes them appear larger.

Use a deep-red lip rouge and apply it with a lip brush, as it is most important to complete lips at the corners of the mouth. Be sure to get support from your finger tips when using the lip brush—your little finger on your chin will give you proper support. Starting at the center of upper lip, draw a line down to the corner of the mouth on both sides and fill in. Smile deeply to pull the lip tight and outline the lower lip. After the lower lip is filled in, open the mouth wide and connect the make-up at the corners of the mouth. The center part of the upper lip should describe an arc or a smooth curve. Never draw a point or leave your lip in a V shape in the center.

The new liquid make-ups do not require the use of powder. If there is too much sheen, however, powder may be dusted lightly over the entire face. Apply with brush or cotton.

The make-up described should be satisfactory for either black-and-white or color film. The final proof of a make-up is what finally appears on film, and to make certain of a good result it is advisable to shoot a make-up test before starting the actual production.

Film editing and story telling


CUT THAT
IDEA
FILM!

12

The single shots are saturated with the tension of a latent meaning which is released like an electric spark when the next shot is joined to it. Of course a shot can have a meaning and significance in itself even without being joined to another. A smile is a smile, even if seen in an isolated shot. But what this smile refers to, what has evoked it, what is its effect and dramatic significance—all this can emerge only from the preceding and following shots.

—BÉLA BALÁZS

You can make or break a picture in the cutting room.

—ANONYMOUS, IN HOLLYWOOD

Editing is the final major step in the creation of a film. It is the technique by which the film strips supplied by director and cameraman are assembled and organized into the most effective narrative pattern.

The visual basis of the film form is not the whole scene as it would appear on the stage but the separate shot: the fragments of action as glimpsed by the shifting movement of the human eye; these shots, rather than the scene, comprise the unit of editing. In filming a picture, separate but related shots—rather than entire scenes—are photographed. These shots then become the raw material with which the film editor works. Ernest Lindgren in *The Art of the Film* says: "The joining together of strips of visual image of greater or shorter length is, of course, a technical device peculiar to the film: but the effects which are obtained thereby, being part of our everyday experience, are by no means peculiar to the film. Novelists . . . represent the same effects by verbal description. The musician, the poet and the dramatist likewise have their own means of obtaining variations of tempo."

BACKGROUND TO THEORY OF EDITING

It was the American film director D. W. Griffith who, in the period between 1908 and 1916, evolved in practice the basic principles of film editing. Griffith, according to Lindgren, "realized instinctively the possibilities which lay in working through the camera, in using the camera not simply as a recording machine, but as a fashioning tool with which the film maker's raw material, namely, that which took place in front of the camera, could be molded. His keen eye saw in the rehearsed scene certain details which he, as story teller, wanted to accentuate. Instinctively he moved his camera nearer to concentrate on them. Thus was he led to break up the colorless one-shot scene into smaller fragments shown in mid-shot, close shot and close-up according to the particular degree of emphasis and concentration he required at each point.

"Griffith, then, broke up the single scene into shots, which enabled him to vary the camera setup from shot to shot, and to give a much more intimate and detailed representation of the action. It gave him a much greater control over his material by enabling him to select the few essential points of attention out of a mass of irrelevant and distracting detail." As Lewis Jacobs in *The Rise of the American Film* observed, Griffith "suddenly understood how the art of the movie director differs from that of the stage director; in movie making, guiding the camera, even more than directing the actor, is the trick."

The Russian film makers of the early twenties who wished to utilize the emotional impact of the film for the purposes of education and propaganda, studied Griffith's films and from them evolved a body of theory and technique. Pudovkin in *Film Technique* recalls that Kuleshov, an early and influential film teacher, "maintained that the material in film work consists of pieces of film, and that the composition method is their joining together in a particular, creatively discovered order. He maintained that film-art does not begin when the artists act and the various scenes are shot—this is only the preparation of the material. Film-art begins from the moment when the director begins to combine and join together the various pieces of film. By joining them in various combinations, in different orders, he obtains differing results."

MONTAGE

"Montage," a French term meaning "assembly," was adopted by the Russian film makers as a more apt description of what took place during the process of putting a film together. The term as used by the French and Russians has a broader connotation than the narrow Hollywood concept, which uses the word to indicate a brief series of dissolving shots, usually of a symbolic nature, to bridge a gap in the story, or to provide a quick justification for an abrupt change in the behavior pattern of a character.

"Montage," according to film critic Béla Balázs, "is the association of ideas rendered visual; it gives the single shots their ultimate meaning, if for no other reason, because the spectator presupposes that in the sequence of pictures that pass before his eyes there is an intentional predetermination and interpretation. This consciousness, this confidence that we are seeing the work of creative intention and purpose, not a number of pictures thrown and stuck together by chance, is a psychological precondition of film-watching and we always expect, presuppose and search for meaning in every film we see."

An amusing experiment in editing based on this theory is described by Pudovkin: "We took from some film or other several close-ups of the well-known Russian actor Mosjukhin. We chose close-ups which were static and which did not express any feeling at all—quiet close-ups. We joined these close-ups, which were all similar, with other bits of film in three different combinations. In the first combination the close-up of Mosjukhin was immediately followed by a shot of a plate of soup standing on a table. It was obvious and certain that Mosjukhin was looking at this soup. In the second combination the face of Mosjukhin was joined to shots showing a coffin in which lay a dead woman. In the third the close-up was followed by a shot of a little girl playing with a funny toy bear. When we showed the three combinations to an audience which had not been let into the secret, the result was terrific. The public raved about the acting of the artist.

They pointed out the heavy pensiveness of his mood over the forgotten soup, were touched and moved by the deep sorrow with which he looked upon the dead woman, and admired the light, happy smile with which he surveyed the girl at play. But we knew that in all three cases the face was exactly the same."

For reasons such as this, Balázs cautions "that montage can not only produce poetry—it can also fake and falsify things more completely than any other human means of expression."

TYPES OF FILM CUTS

Before we get into the actual business of joining together the strips of film, let's review some of the types of cuts in common use in film editing and relate them to their story-telling functions.

THE STRAIGHT CUT

This is the most frequently used transition from shot to shot. The images in the preceding shot are instantaneously displaced by those in the following shot; in a series of closely related images the feeling conveyed is that of a continuous action.

This method of constructing a scene out of a series of shots rather than filming a scene in one long unbroken take has obvious advantages for the story teller. The assembled shots present various facets of an action and so make possible a greater visual interest; also, the editor, by being able to control the lengths of the shots and, consequently, the period of time they will appear on the screen, has the opportunity to establish a visual rhythm as well.

CUTTING ON ACTION

This is a cut made while an action is in progress; it is joined to the following shot, which shows a continuation of the same action as the preceding shot, but with a change in camera distance or camera angle.

Its function is to allow the story teller to shift the spectator's attention and to place emphasis on the area of an action he feels is most significant. For instance, suppose we were filming the climactic slipper-fitting scene in Cinderella. We would start with a full shot to establish locale and get the dramatic business started. Cinderella is seated; she removes her old tattered shoe and is handed the precious glass slipper. Still in the full shot we see her take the glass slipper and move it toward her foot. We cut in the middle of this action to a close shot in which we see a closer view of her expression as well as a continuation of the action of bringing the glass slipper to her foot. As she starts to place her foot into the glass slipper we cut again during the action, this time to a close-up of her foot as it slides into the perfect-fitting slipper.

These cuts must be planned in advance. In filming the action enough footage must be shot to allow for a slight amount of overlap in the cuts. The usual procedure is to shoot the complete action from each camera position; then, in editing, the shots are cut on the frames that most closely correspond to one another. This will allow the patterm of action to flow smoothly from shot to shot. If there is too much overlap there will be a repeat of part of the action; if there is not enough overlap there will be a jump.

CUT-AWAY

This is literally a cut away to an action that is incidental or secondary to the main action. Its story function is generally to show either a reaction to the main action, or to justify a lapse of time. As an example, let's consider another scene from the story of Cinderella: the scene of Cinderella going to the ball. We see Cinderella enter the magnificent coach and drive off. Since the journey to the castle of the Prince is uneventful it would be pointless to follow the coach from Cinderella's house to the palace, so we cut away to a shot of the stepsisters enjoying themselves at the ball. Then we cut to the palace entrance and the coach carrying Cinderella drives up. Now, even though the time that the camera is on the stepsisters is brief, and the distance from Cinderella's house to the palace a fairly long one, such is the conditioning of audiences to the film form that they will accept as perfectly credible that the coach could have covered the distance during the interval while we were looking in on the stepsisters at the ball.

CROSS-CUTTING

Cross-cutting is generally used to explain the relationship between two different actions occurring separately; and it is also used to point up a contrast by a parallel development of an idea. The vanity and parasitic existance of Cinderella's stepsisters could be emphasized by cross-cutting a series of alternating shots contrasting Cinderella's attitude and pattern of living with that of her stepsisters:

The bored stepsisters toying with their elaborate coiffures.

Cinderella's soot-covered, disheveled appearance as she cheerfully cleans the fireplace.

The stepsisters trying on an endless array of beautiful gowns and posturing before the mirror.

Cinderella as she sews a patch on a patch on her neat but threadbare frock.

The stepsisters being received by the Prince at the ball.

Cinderella alone and weeping beside her fireplace.

INTERCUT

This is an editing device to heighten dramatic tension and increase story tempo. By taking a long key scene and breaking it down into a series of shots that are cut progressively shorter you create a feeling of something impending, something about to happen.

Using Cinderella again, it works like this:

The scene is Cinderella at the ball dancing with her Prince. Start with a leisurely full shot of Cinderella and the Prince dancing; they are enraptured, oblivious of the time. Cut to a close shot of the clock: one minute until twelve. Cut back to a close shot of Cinderella and the Prince as they dance; they glide into a series of twirling turns. Cut to clock: forty-five seconds until twelve. Cut to Cinderella's coach and horses, then into a close-up of the horses as they stir nervously. Cut to tight close-up of Cinderella and Prince as they whirl into a blur. Cut to extreme close-up of clock: it strikes midnight. Close shot of Cinderella and Prince still dancing; she stops abruptly. Close-up of Cinderella's face: the shock of the sudden awareness of her predicament. Very brief close-up of Prince, puzzled by her behavior. Very brief close-up of Cinderella as she tears herself free of the Prince. End the sequence with a long shot of Cinderella dashing through the crowded ballroom; startled guests stare as she flees into the night.

FLASHBACK

A flashback indicates a shift in time or place. It is a shot used to remind the audience of something past, or something remembered by one of the characters.

GRAMMAR AND ILLUSION

The cuts, action cuts, cut-aways, cross-cutting, intercutting and flashbacks all play a part in the grammatical structure of a film. To punctuate a film we use fades, wipes, flop-overs and cross-dissolves. These devices are useful only insofar as they contribute to the clarity with which an idea is expressed; if they call attention to themselves, they fail in their purpose.

To succeed, a film must create and sustain an illusion of reality. This requires a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience. The moment that an obvious technical device intrudes itself between picture story and audience, the backstage machinery becomes apparent and the illusion is destroyed.

SELECTION OF SHOTS

As editor you review the accumulated footage, looking for shots that contain significant detail and revealing action. Select the shots on the basis of how each will be related visually and dramatically to the shots adjoining it; the scenes made up of these selected shots must then be evaluated on the basis of what they will contribute to the film as a whole.

In making a choice between various shots photographed from different camera angles but intended to communicate the same story point, the first consideration must be the objective of the shot. If clarity and immediate recognition of a person or object is the intent, then choose the shot which shows the person or object in the shape in which the distinctive features are seen from the most recognizable point of view. This point of view, in most instances, will be the one in which the characteristic silhouette is emphasized. Airplane spotters, for example, are taught to identify aircraft by the distinguishing characteristics recognizable in their silhouettes; in changing the style of women's clothes from year to year, the dress designers concentrate on the most apparent aspect of a style: its silhouette; the human physiognomy, as well as that of most animals, is most readily identified in silhouette. This does not mean that in lighting a set you hit the background lights hard and kill the main lights in front in order to emphasize the silhouette; it does mean being aware of the recognition value of a characteristic shape and keeping a sharp eye on the shapes and values in the background to see that they do not distract from or obscure the basic shape of the center of interest.

On the other hand, if it is your intent for reasons of plot to conceal or obscure the identity of the person or object being shown, choose a shot of the familiar person or object photographed from an unfamiliar angle of view.

PACE

When we speak of a film as fast-moving, or one that drags, we refer to the pace at which the story unfolds. When the audience can anticipate the next move in story development before it takes place, then the story is moving too slowly.

The pace at which a story unfolds will be dictated largely by story content. In the early part of a film the pace can be quite leisurely: the interest of the audience is held by its curiosity about a group of characters with whom it is unfamiliar and a problem in which those characters are becoming enmeshed. After the audience becomes familiar with the characters and is interested in their problem the pace of the unfolding of the story may be increased.

Lindgren, writing on the relation of cutting to scene content, says: "Part of the skill of the film maker lies in carefully adjusting the tempo of his cutting to the emotional content of his scene, and in securing the alternation of one tempo with another so as to secure the clearest articulation of the rhythm of the film as a whole. Quick cutting in a scene which is quiet and peaceful will appear jerky and abrupt and give the spectator an appreciable sense of discomfort. For an exciting scene, on the other hand, he will instinctively demand quick cutting; his mind will be impelled to leap from one detail to the next, and unless the film editor in his cutting has anticipated these impulses at the right moment, the scene will suffer from slowness and heaviness, and the excitement will be to a large extent destroyed. In such a scene as this, indeed, by accelerating the cutting speed even to a super-normal degree, the film maker can, if he wishes, exaggerate the intensity of the spectator's excitement."

REAL TIME AND FILM TIME

In film editing you deal with various aspects of time. There is a difference between film time and actual time. As an obvious example, a story may cover a span of fifty years, yet the film story is told in seventy-five minutes. On the stage the passing of time is indicated by dropping the curtain. When it rises after the fifteen-minute intermission the dramatic time that has elapsed between curtains may be a single moment, an hour, a week, or a century. A lapse of time on the screen can be shown by a cross-dissolve to a different time of day, a different season, or a different locale. If the main thread of the story deals with a single locale, then a scene played in another location intercut between two scenes of the basic locale will often bridge a time lapse.

Film time can be juggled to conform to the dictates of the story. It can be compressed or expanded to heighten drama; it can be grossly exaggerated to create comedy. As a wild example of how time can be distorted to create comedy let's take a scene at the climax of a Western. The hero is captured by the Indians. The cavalry which had a rendezvous with the hero has been delayed. At the time of the hero's capture the cavalry is a hundred miles away. The Indians tie the hero to a tree. Cut to the cavalry. They receive word of the hero's plight; they mount their horses and start riding to the rescue. The Indians raise their bows and take aim at the hero. Cut back to the cavalry riding hard. Shot of a road marker: 80 miles to Indian camp. Cut to Indians as they pull their bows taut. Shot of the cavalry. The Indians, only 10 feet from hero, release their arrows. Shot of horses' hoofs churning down a road. Shot of the arrows in flight. Shot of horses. Shot of road markers: 50 miles to go . . . 30 miles to go . . . 10 miles to go. Shot of arrows still in flight. Shot of hero's face in cold sweat. Shot of cavalry entering Indian camp. Shot of Indians as they take in surprise at sudden arrival of cavalry. The arrows continue in flight. The Indians run away. The cavalry gives chase. The commanding officer of the cavalry sees the arrows in flight. Shot of the arrows. Officer jumps from horse, rushes to hero, cuts rope that binds him to tree, then they duck just as arrows chonk into tree.

This incongruous juggling of time which the audience realizes is not only improbable but impossible has actually taken place before their eyes. They don't believe it but it has happened. And they laugh, we hope, at the outrageous deception of their senses.

SILENT FILM, SOUND FILM

Within the form of the silent film as opposed to the sound film there is a greater latitude in the possible arrangements of the film strips. Dialogue imposes restrictions. The logical progression of a sentence may not be the most compatible pattern for a procession of images. If the words are set and cannot be transposed or manipulated freely, the organization of the film strips is dictated by the words. Ideally, the ideas to be expressed should be the determining factors in choice and arrangement of pictures; and if the pictures can express the ideas without words, so much the better. Pictures that do no more than illustrate words are weak pictures. Obviously, if we were concerned with a book our primary concern would be with words: whatever pictures were used would be illustrations of the text. A film, however, is pictures in motion, and whatever words are used should supplement the pictures rather than dominate them.

TITLES

Titles define the area of subject matter; they give the audience a clue as to what it may expect. Even a collection of disconnected and unrelated shots of the kind that accumulate in home-movie reels can be pulled into a cohesive whole by an idea that is general enough to include a variety of material and yet give the impression that it is all related.

The seed of an idea for a general heading must be discovered within the material itself. The search is for a common denominator that will establish a relationship between a group of more or less unrelated scenes and subject matter. Sometimes a still photographer looking for ideas for picture stories will go through a portfolio of his miscellaneous shots and search for a general theme that will allow him to build a story around an unrelated collection of photographs he has already shot and printed. The important thing he must do in making his selection of shots is to pick a group of photographs that have at least one thing in common. This common denominator may be simply the fact that all the photographs were shot on rainy days; or it may be a series of photographs in which the hands are made dominant to show how much they reveal of people's feelings. A series may be developed around "Feet in Action," or "Smiles," or "Yawns." The common denominator may be a person present in all the shots, or it could be a common background.

Walt Disney allowed himself a world of scope by naming his television show *Disneyland.* The Disney personality was the one common denominator to be found in the great variety of films, both cartoon and live-action, produced by Disney. There are many such catch-all titles such as Omnibus, Cavalcade, Parade, Revue and, of course, the Family Newsreel. A glance through the pages of a magazine devoted to a listing of television programming should provide a wealth of additional ideas for unifying titles.

FILM EDITOR AS STORY TELLER

To summarize: editing is concerned with purpose; the frame of reference is provided by the story. In fiction films the scenes and sequences are interconnected to reveal the causes and effects dictated by the plot structure. In documentary and educational films it is the theme, the point to be made, that dictates the relationship of scenes. The worth of each scene is determined by the purpose it will serve in its relation to the film story as a whole. What does the scene contribute? Does it move the story? Does it clarify plot or dramatize theme? Does it develop or illuminate character? Does it entertain, or evoke an emotional response from the audience? Each scene must justify its presence in the film by performing one or more of these functions.

Editing is concerned with the interplay of concealment and revelation in terms of character and plot, in terms of theme and purpose. The editor by his choice of shots directs the attention of the audience to the specific details of the story he wants them to notice; conversely, he withholds from them that which he does not wish them to know.

Editing is concerned not only with the clarity of communication, but also with the tempo and pace at which ideas and meanings are communicated to the audience.

The film editor has all the elements of the story with which to work. If he uses them skillfully he can pique the curiosity of the audience, win its sympathy, arouse its anger, provoke its indignation, excite its laughter, and lead it on, mindful always to keep a step ahead of it, until the film's climax is reached and the story problem resolved.

When the film maker seeks an audience beyond the circle of family and friends he assumes a moral obligation: the audience will give its time and attention; the film maker in turn must have something to say and a technique capable of communicating it. Every film he makes need not be a smashing success, but there should be the certainty that everything that could be done by taste, talent and good judgment has been done.

Part Four / Notes on personal movie making

I believe that, through the act of living, the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us which can mould us, but which can also be affected by us. A balance must be established between these two worlds—the one inside us and the one outside us. As the result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one. And it is this world that we must communicate.

—HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

Personal environment as subject matter

13

[The film] . . . is paved and repaved with good intentions; its heart is insistently in the right place; its leading characters are motivated by the noblest of sentiments. All that (the) writer-director . . . forgot was to provide a believable story.

—CINEMA REVIEW IN TIME MAGAZINE

Let's discuss some of the film subjects that arise from the everyday activities of the home-movie maker. A good many of his activities will provide him with story material *if* that material is properly conceived and organized. Since the immediate objective in purchasing a home-movie camera is to make movies about the home and since so much of the obvious subject matter has become hackneyed, it may not be amiss to make some passing comments and offer a few words of caution on some of the subjects.

FILMING THE BABY

This is the perennial subject of home movies, and it is still one of the best reasons there is for having a movie camera. It is the one subject that doesn't require a manufactured story line. The baby is the story and almost anything other than a direct documentary approach becomes false or too coy for comfort. Films of the baby are for the record, and that should be the basis of your approach. Photograph everything about the baby that appeals to you. You've got a great character to work with: uninhibited and completely himself whether he's laughing, crying, or sucking his thumb. Let him decide on the bits of business, you get it down on film.

VACATION MOVIES

Beware of great hunks of photogenic splendor, the sort of thing that looks spectacular in nature but would bore you stiff in a film travelogue. Vast scenic vistas are an almost irresistible temptation to start panning the camera. Don't. You can do better with a series of well-framed normal shots.

The continuity for a vacation film can be planned in advance, or it can be developed to fit footage already shot. Existing footage should be cut into a rough reel; then study the reel to see if there is a germ of an idea for a continuity. If the material does not lend itself to being shaped into a story, simply arrange it in chronological order. To cover material you failed to get on location shoot inserts of picture post cards, souvenirs, brochures and catalogues.

To develop a simple continuity for a vacation movie, look for situations that provide some sort of conflict. The conflict doesn't have to be anything more than a difference of opinion. The husband wants to go one place for his vacation, the wife to another. The narrative question is posed: where will they go, and how will they reconcile their differences.

These small differences provide enough of a thread of continuity upon which to hang the itinerary, the scenic shots, and the points of interest. At every fork in the road the husband decides they should go to the right, the wife to the left. Whenever it's time to stop for a meal the places that look good to the husband look dreadful to the wife. (The business of a man and wife trying to get together on an appropriate place to stop for something to eat has been beautifully documented by James Thurber in a perceptively funny short story called "A Couple of Hamburgers." It can be found in Thurber's *Let Your Mind Alone*, and also in *The Thurber Carnival.*)

Whether the area of disagreement between husband and wife grows larger or is cleared up at end of film depends on how you happen to feel about husbands, about wives, about marital disagreements and about how and where you spend your vacation.

CHRISTMAS MOVIES

I hesitate to suggest a continuity for a Christmas movie: it is one of those occasions that, taken pretty much as is, can yield better footage than anything you can set up and stage.

The important things to be captured are the intangibles: the spirit, the joy, the friendliness, the warmth. And one of the best ways to attempt to capture these qualities on film is to make full preparations beforehand.

Check your camera. Make sure it's loaded and operating properly; have plenty of film on hand.

Check the light extensions. Make sure the electrical plugs and wire connections are in good condition, and see that you have long enough extension cords to be able to place your lights where you need them.

Avoid plugging too many photoflood lamps into any one line. The amount of wattage that can be safely carried on any single line varies and it would be a good idea to find out exactly what the maximum load is. Better keep some extra fuses on hand, just in case.

When attempting to film an area of the room large enough to include the Christmas tree, the presents around it, the children around the presents and the family around the children, you'll need a lot of light. Get a number of extra photofloods to kick up the light intensity, but don't forget to check the accumulated wattage against the maximum that can be carried safely by the lines.

To cover the area described it may be necessary to buy or borrow a wide-angle lens or a wide-angle-lens attachment.

After the children have gone to bed on Christmas Eve get the camera and lights set up where things are going to happen. Check the focus. Arrange the lights so that you have a full even illumination covering the entire area in which the action will take place. In this way you allow the people freedom of movement and you eliminate the necessity of shifting and adjusting the lights. Take a light reading and determine the exposure. Set the diaphragm opening. You're ready to roll.

All these preparations may take most of the night but they should prove worthwhile; if you don't get the shots as they take place spontaneously you may as well forget them. It's impossible to restage the scenes or get the children to relive those first delicious moments of surprise and wonder.

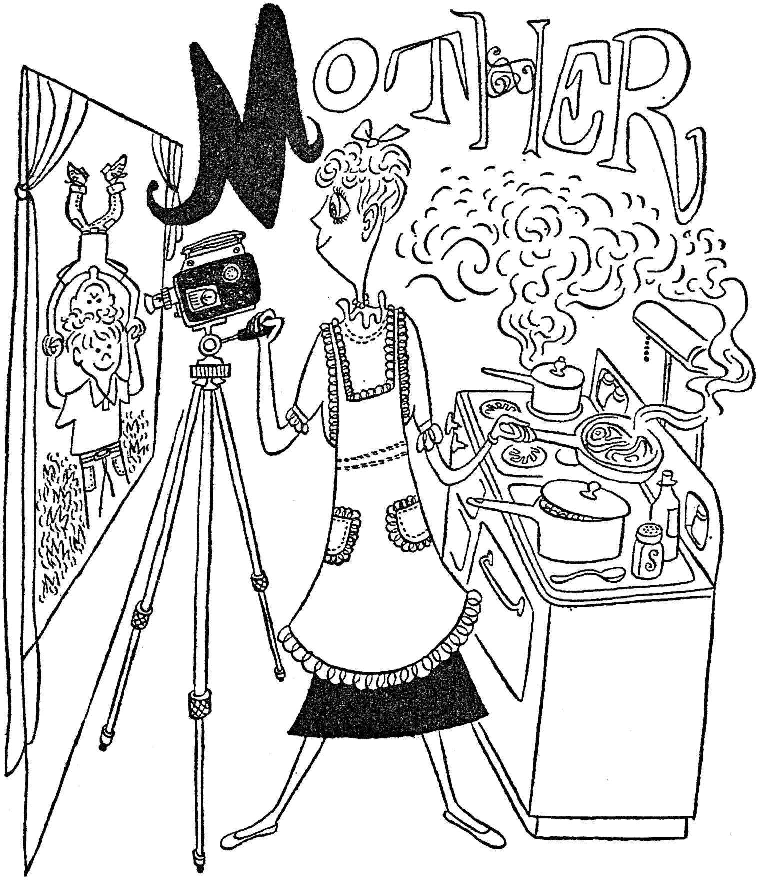
YOUR JOB

Everybody likes to talk shop. Some people like the work they do, some don't. But they all talk about it. When you are explaining your particular job to someone unfamiliar with it, regardless of how vivid the imagery with which you depict your daily duties, you can see by the expression on the face of your listener that in spite of his polite nods of understanding he doesn't have more than the vaguest conception of what you're talking about.

If you own or run your own business, if you work for somebody else, or if you are a professional, a movie of your work can be an informative subject. It should increase your awareness of what you do, and it may help you see yourself more clearly in relation to your work. You may lack the facilities and equipment enjoyed by the professional studios, but you do possess a number of important advantages. For instance, your time is not budgeted; you can take as much of it as you need to develop the ideas that will express what you want to say about your work. You can shoot at more opportune times because you are not fighting a deadline. And more important, you don't have to call in a specialist to tell you what your business is about.

YOUR HOBBY

Does your hobby involve movement? Can you make it move? Can you create movement in a movie about it?



If you can't, forget it as a movie subject and shoot it with your still camera.

There are some subjects that just do not lend themselves readily to being told in the motion-picture form. Anyone who tells you that all it takes is a little imagination ought to be told to go climb a tree.

There are tricks and devices that can be used to give a reel of static material a kind of synthetic movement.

For instance, a stamp collector might be turning the pages of an album as we truck the camera down to a close-up of a particular stamp. From this we slowly pan along the album, revealing other stamps. A hand comes in the scene, picks up one of the stamps, and as the camera follows it the hand places the stamp under a microscope. Then we cut to a shot looking through the microscope as the stamp is brought into focus, to show some aspect of it that would be of great interest to philatelists. But camera movement and artistic composition and dramatic lighting will *not* make this a good movie subject.

The only way to make a film about a static subject is to weave a story around it, to find an element in the subject that gives it human interest. This is not unlike the problem of the advertising man who sells the sizzle instead of the steak, or creates an aura of glamour around a can of beans.

If games and sports are your hobby, perhaps you ought to be warned that they have been notoriously fatal subjects for professional film dramas unless they were totally subordinated to a plot. However, this need not restrain you from attempting a film on a sports subject; in your favor there is an abundance of movement and action, plus the natural element of competition and the desire to win.

A MOVIE PORTRAIT

For many centuries the human face and figure have been recorded in paint and stone. Our century has added the dimension of movement.

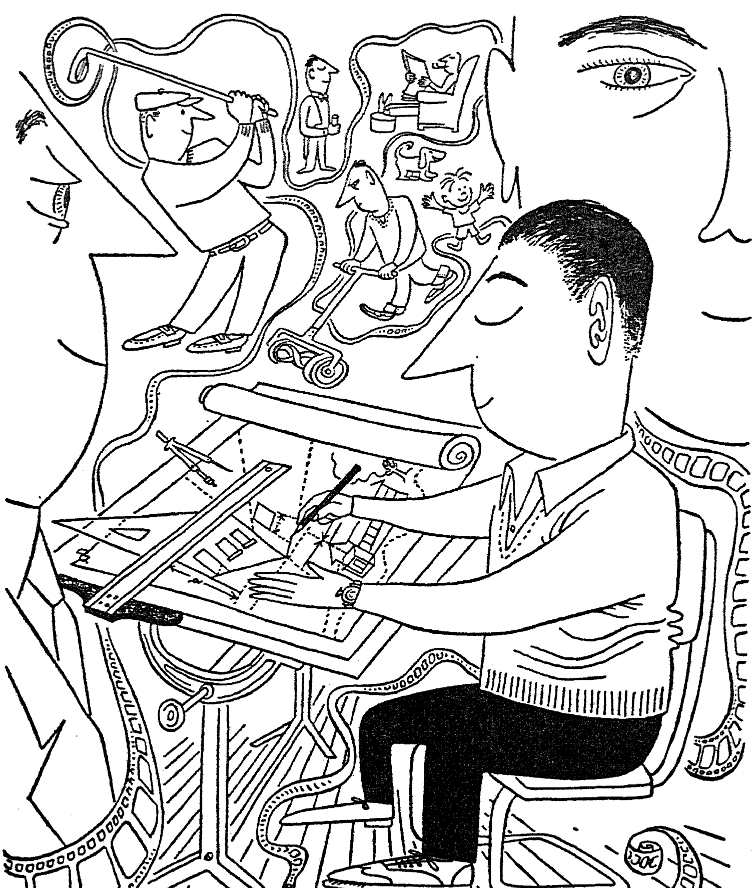
In a movie portrait we can show a continuous flow of images. We see our subject in long shots and close-ups, intense at his work, actively participating in his favorite sport or relaxed at his hobby. It is a living portrait to which pertinent shots revealing interesting new facets of our subject can be added, or from which material that now seems irrelevant can be eliminated. It increases our range of recognition. We not only recognize our subject by his familiar features but also by his characteristic movements and gestures.

The subject of a movie portrait can be your wife, your child, a friend, a relative, acquaintance or anyone who interests you sufficiently to warrant the undertaking.

Proper background locations aid in characterizing the subject. They are important in revealing the environment in which the subject moves and by which he is influenced.

Old snapshots and still photographs can be used to fill in biographical lapses covering any period previous to the time of shooting. Make use of whatever additional props and devices may be required to reveal, delineate or clarify the character of your subject.

Before any shooting is done, arrange an interview with your subject and find out as much as you can about his likes and dislikes, his interests, hobbies and general characteristics. Also, it would be a good idea at this time to work out a flexible shooting schedule to coincide with whatever spare time he can make available to you. It is almost a physical impossibility to make a candid movie as you might make a candid still photograph. The real opportunity for achieving a candid quality in your movie will arise during the actual shooting session. It is then



that the little actions, traits and unconscious habits that define character will clearly reveal themselves.

While your reactions from the interview are still fresh in your mind, write down whatever pops into your head about the subject. These will be your unconscious reactions and a pretty good indication of your honest feelings about him. These notes can act as a rough script, or, at least, as an itemized list of the things you will want to record on film.

The intention of a movie portrait is to present an informal and intimate impression of the person—a sort of profile rather than a biographical study. Each person is a challenge to your ability. Photograph them searchingly, candidly, honestly. Don't, under any circumstances, shoot a lot of static, studied dramatic poses.

If your subject is active and prefers living and working out-of-doors, shoot in crisp light and get a feeling on film of sun and sky. If he is a studious person, use a quiet approach—less contrasty light and, perhaps, more indoor shots.

You can show a great deal about your subject indirectly—that is, by the reactions of others to him: His dog's tail-wagging welcome, his child running joyfully to meet him, the animated expressions on the faces of friends in conversation.

You might even do a portrait by never revealing the face of your subject until the end of the reel. The portrait could be a cumulative build-up of his hands in action, his feet in action, back views and long shots where he is far enough away to make the features of his face indistinguishable. Throughout the reel these fragments gradually build up an over-all impression of the subject, and then for the climax of the portrait a number of impressive close-ups of his face can be shown.

Whatever your approach, try to develop an episode, or dramatize some incident that will provide dramatic emphasis to the portrait and give impact to the entire reel.

Maybe the subject of your reel is an architect and he's supervising the building of his first home, or his fiftieth, or he's a photographer and he has just been notified that one of his pictures has been accepted for hanging in an international salon, or he's a sports addict and participating in an event that is fast reaching the decisive stage—will he sink the putt, will he put away that overhead smash, will he knock the ball through the wicket? Any of these situations can be developed into an interesting and exciting climax to a portrait reel.

Good portraits in any medium are difficult. The movie camera can do the drawing for you and it can re-create lifelike movement, but it can not select, interpret or emphasize; these you must do.

In this type of picture making, as in all others, the result will be determined by the integrity of your conception and the skill with which you handle the tools of the motion picture. More than in most film making, a character portrait is built up from a series of small but important actions. Little mannerisms which might be dispensed with in an action film are the keystone around which a character portrait is constructed.

Such things as stance, gait and facial expressions can, when properly assembled, reveal the essential qualities of the person you are filming.

The material dealt with is derived from the core of human nature, which often reveals itself in simple but dramatic ways. In this respect the amateur is able to operate on the same level with the professional, with results limited only by the extent of his own creativity. Because of the lack of money and facilities, it is difficult to compete with the professional treatment of action scenes; still you can, if you understand your subject and treat it honestly, develop scenes of great emotional intensity. A good portrait is a good story.

A MOVIE LETTER

Once more let me emphasize the value of a theme. Whether you intend shooting a simple movie record of your family or a complicated piece of film fiction, you won't have a coherent movie unless you have a *theme* on which to hang your picture. This theme becomes the core of every scene you shoot, and every scene must help develop your basic premise or it doesn't belong in the picture.

One of the simplest and most effective themes for a home movie is the idea underlying a film made by a young couple whose home had been in Europe and who have been in this country since before World War II. They were married just after the end of the war, and the girl wanted to tell her parents (who were still living in England) what it was like in America. She wanted to tell them what their apartment looked like, and about the stores they shopped in, and the people they saw—words just couldn't describe these things adequately, because words are subject to many and various interpretations. No, it had to be something more objective.

Her husband, a home-movie enthusiast, had the answer. Instead of trying to explain to the girl's parents what it was like, they would show them. They would take them through a typical day, at home in the "States," with the aid of the movie camera.

The young married couple decided to call the movie *Letter to London.* That set the *theme* for the picture. A letter, whether on paper or film, should be personal and intimate. That determined the *feeling* that had to be present throughout the reel.

What would her parents in England be most interested in? What would they want to know? With this for a premise, it couldn't help but become a successful film, because the camera was being used to fulfill its highest purpose—as an instrument of communication.

The couple photographed one full day from the time they got up in the morning until they retired at night. Shots of the bedroom as the alarm clock awakened them, the breakfast nook as they ate breakfast, the husband's hurried departure for work; then the camera dwelt on how the young wife spent her day. It covered her shopping at a food supermarket where everything was available (her mother was amazed at the sight of plentiful oranges, and the fact that they could be purchased without ration coupons), shopping in clothing stores, window shopping, streets, buildings and people.

The camera continued its letter writing with graphic bits back in the apartment at the end of the day: preparing dinner on the new stove, an occasional glance at the cookbook just to make sure, and then the husband returning from work. Dinner, talking and visiting with friends in their living room, and then to bed.

You will notice that the young couple's apartment is not shown for itself alone, but as a background in relation to the people living in it. The interest must always be in the people. The environment is the setting in which they move.

The opening shot of the picture was a close-up of a hand starting a letter, which dissolved into the ringing alarm clock and from that into the picture proper. Whenever there was need for a title, a cutback to the hand writing continued to carry out the theme of the movie.

After the film was edited, the authors had a duplicate print made and sent to the parents in England. The parents had no projector, so they took the film to the Eastman Kodak representative in London. He gladly ran the picture for them. The parents were thrilled and delighted with the movie-letter. After it was shown once, the projectionist asked if they would like to see it again. Of course they would. And the second showing seemed even more enjoyable than the first.

It's a good idea, and it can be used in different ways. How long since you've written your friends in the East? Or the West? Or your friend Dugie in Honolulu? (For that matter, how long since he's written you?) Why not make up a reel showing the new baby, the house that's finally going up, that you're still having trouble with that slice in your golf game but your backhand in tennis is improving, that Jeri and Lynn started attending a dance class and here's how they're doing. Edit the stuff, have a dupe made and send it out to one group of friends with postage and a package for its return. After they've seen it and returned it, send it out to other friends around the country.

The "letter on film" idea could be extended to a sort of letter to the future. This is the way we dressed in 1957; these were the newspaper headlines and the prices of food, clothing and housing; the cars looked like this and the women were wearing their hair like that and here's a street scene at Fifth and Broadway. Just a collection of commonplace images today, but with the passing of even a few years they become nostalgic. With the passing of many years they may become historic.

This movie-letter idea can give a direction to your home-movie making. If you continue to film with regularity, in a few years you will have a valuable record of these best years of your life.

Children as film subjects

14

Children play at being great and wonderful people, at the ambitions they will put away for one reason or another before they grow into ordinary men and women. Mankind as a whole had a like dream once; everybody and nobody built up the dream bit by bit; and the ancient story tellers are there to make us remember what mankind would have been like, had not fear and the failing will and the laws of nature tripped up its heels.... I have read in a fabulous book that Adam had but to imagine a bird and it was born into life, and that he created all things out of himself by nothing more important than an unflagging fancy; and heroes who can make a ship out of a shaving have but little less of the divine prerogatives.

—WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Children are natural-born actors. All their games are take-offs or satires on the grown-up's world of work and play. They love to imitate adult patterns and behavior. Kids play house, and they play war, they play at the conflict of good and evil: cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians, Earthmen and Martians, and numerous variations on the theme.

They are imaginative story tellers. Their imagery is vivid and their action violent. They are not handicapped by cumbersome props and literal settings—when they play cowboys they don't need horses, they merely gallop around and slap their sides; their pointed fingers are their trusty six-shooters and the loud shouts of Bang! Bang! will knock off the wickedest of men.

These wonderful natural traits can be used to a film maker's advantage: instead of shooting a lot of miscellaneous scenes of children doing nothing in particular, let them write or work out a photoplay of their own. They could also plan the settings, choose the locales, design and make whatever costumes may be required.

Such photoplay projects will serve a double purpose: they'll continue your movie record of the children's growth and development, and they'll provide the children with an excellent opportunity to channel their energy, imagination and creative instinct into a worthwhile and exciting undertaking.

The simplest ciné camera can adequately handle the job. In fact simple equipment that is easy to move and easily adjusted will be a distinct advantage in trying to keep up with a gang of restless and fast-moving children. Settings will present no problem if, again, you will take a cue from the kids. They take over a vacant lot and designate it the Plains of the Wild West, or the flight deck of a giant airplane carrier; and by labeling a junk heap Treasure Island, it becomes so. A simple title preceding a scene will label it just as effectively. Hollywood can have its literal realism; imaginative film making provides its own unique pleasure.

By shooting everything outdoors you can avoid the problems of interior lighting as well as the labor of moving and setting lights. When the story calls for an interior set just use an outside wall on the sunny side of the house or garage. Hang some drapes or flour sacks over the outside of the windows, and perhaps a picture on the wall; apple boxes artfully arranged will serve as table and chairs, and a throw rug on the ground should complete the illusion.

In regard to acting, the less direction the better. It's the children's production—and regardless of whether they decide to play it straight or to ham it up all over the place, let them express themselves.

MOVIE MAKING FOR MOTHERS

Movie making is generally Father's hobby. He shoots for fun, and when the spirit moves him. That's as it should be. But the children continue to grow, to reveal new facets of their unfolding personalities, and a lot of this happens on the days when father is away at work.

Mother is around the children all day long. If she had a loaded movie camera close at hand it would be a simple matter to grab an occasional shot or two of the kids in action.

Children are spontaneous. They act instinctively. Mother sees Junior do something that indicates a new phase in his growing up. She is surprised and delighted. They must get a shot of that in Junior's movie reel. She'll remind Papa to shoot it this Sunday, that is, if he's in the mood and not too tired.

Sunday. Papa is going to try to recapture that revelation in action that Junior performed during the week. He gets out the movie equipment and sets it up. Junior, after being scrubbed, brushed and dressed, is placed in the proper position before the camera. The exposure reading is taken. The distance from camera to subject is measured.

The camera is rolling. Papa motions for Junior to start. Well, go on, do it, Junior. Like you did last Wednesday, you know—like Mother told me about.

Nothing happens.

Junior, whose actions last Wednesday had been the free expression of a boy at play, is now embarrassed and inhibited.

I said earlier that children are actors; they are, but only in a play sense. Their acting is an extension of their play. The normal child without professional training cannot re-create or reenact an action or express an emotion he doesn't feel. The only way to get a record of those spontaneously expressive moments is to shoot them as they take place. And the only one likely to be around at the time is Mother.

The more Mother uses the camera, the more the kids will grow accustomed to it. The camera will no longer be an intruder, it will be something they are familiar with, something entirely incidental to their play. It will not be necessary to interrupt the kids at play, or to attempt to direct them. Mother and camera, once they are accepted as a part of the children's world, will be free to capture those tender moments of growth revealing itself.

FILM MAKING AS A SCHOOL PROJECT

In a report, *How Children Can Be Creative*, published by the United States Office of Education, it is pointed out: "To some children who cannot be academically successful, art experiences are especially valuable. Such experiences give them an opportunity to succeed that is often necessary for their mental and emotional security."

Film-making and film-appreciation groups among school children are no longer innovations, and in a number of schools they form part of the curriculum or are carried on as a spare-time activity.

Lena Hodgson, in an article in *Sight and Sound*, reports on the work being done in and around Liverpool, England, where a group of teachers is engaged in introducing the practice and theory of cinema into the school curriculum. The ages of the children in the various groups involved ran from ten-year-olds up to boys and girls of eighteen. Miss Hodgson writes: "In schools . . . film making has already proved its value. At the lowest assessment, it occupies a number of children in an activity which calls for a contribution to a joint effort, which makes them undertake a task (and to them it is a complex one), requiring logical and precise thought as well as determination. More than that, the children are forced into an awareness of what they see and how people behave, when they must try to break a story down into purely visual terms. What matters is that the film should be the children's own creation: inevitably they need help, but the film merely made by a teacher in their presence is valueless.

"Other activities (dramatics, etc.) make parallel demands, but film making most notably calls for 'active seeing.' The essential aim of school film making is to encourage children to use their eyes and their critical faculties. References, however simply phrased, to visual beauty, human behavior and such abstractions are likely to seem so much idle sound. But when you are forced to fill the frame interestingly, and must do it in your own town or street, you begin to become aware of the less obvious beauty and poetry in the familiar surroundings. And when your own story tails away miserably and unexcitingly, you wonder why others are more successful. That is the beginning: unimportant in itself, the film is merely a means to an end."

Film making can be allied to other school subjects. Writing the stories and developing the scripts can form part of the English lessons. The procedure generally followed in such projects is to have each child write a story. The teacher makes a selection of the best of these, then in discussion with the class they choose the best ideas and use them to make a composite story.

Miss Hodgson describes an assignment in which each of the children was to write a story about himself, describing something he would like to have happen at school. "At first, their stories were told in snappy dialogue with little description of action; then, reminded that the film would be silent, they produced stories full of action, but luridly reminiscent of what they had seen at the cinema and not concerned with themselves at all. A third attempt resulted in the acceptable themes of a rounders game and a paper chase, which, linked together, would require little dialogue and much action and would be within their own experience.

"At this point one child opportunely asked: 'If we tell the story like this in words, how are we going to tell it in pictures on the screen?' and scripting practice began with the tribulations of Jack and Jill told in a series of drawings."

During the shooting of the film the teacher acts as adviser on lighting and exposure and the children take turns in operating the camera. The editing is done sometimes by the children working with the teacher, and sometimes by the teacher after discussing with the class which shots should be included in the final film and how long they should be.

The report *How Children Can Be Creative* observes, "Creative experiences do something for the spiritual and emotional aspects of the child's life that skills alone never can." As young film makers they are learning to see more actively, and as one of a sixteen-to-eighteen-year-old group wrote, "I now realize that a film is a creation and not just scenes put in front of a camera."

APPENDIX I / Story and the animated cartoon

The cartoon film has a unique place in the art of cinema. It has its own technique, its own economy, and its own form of stardom. It represents the invasion of the painter and draughtsman into the dramatic medium of the cinema; no longer content merely to draw and to colour—they see in the cinema a means to make pictures move as well. The imagination turned magically into life and action.

—ROGER MANVELL

Envy me, Mice, I'm going into pictures.

—KRAZY KAT

Why animated cartoons? First, because there are certain types of stories that do not lend themselves readily to live-action films. Live-action films deal with surface reality, with a naturalism far beyond that achieved on the stage. But because of this affinity to things as they are, the live-action film has been embarrassingly unsuccessful in its attempts to handle children's stories, fairy tales, fables, satire and fantasy. Second, as Gilbert Seldes, in his book *The Public Arts*, writes, "If we were not so accustomed to it, if it were not in view day by day, we should celebrate, in reverence or by shouting in public places, the incredible wonder of the animated cartoon."

I suspect that the animated cartoon derives its delight in movement and music from dance; its simplicity of characterization from the mediaeval morality plays, its basic story line from familiar fables and fairy tales; and its robust and rowdy comedy from the commedia dell' arte by way of the slapstick comedies of the silent-film era.

The animated cartoon is one of the most plastic and flexible mediums of visual expression. It is a controlled fusion of image, movement and sound that allows for the employment of all the devices of distortion, caricature and the dynamic use of either abstract or literal forms. James Algar, writing on "The Animated Film" in *The Pacific Spectator,* makes an interesting comparison between live action and animation. He says, "The live-action camera might be likened to the physical eye, which sees the objective world about us. The animation camera, on the other hand, might be said to represent the mind's eye, able to visualize imaginary things. It enjoys these peculiar advantages over the live-action camera: *the ability, first, to re-create objects no longer existing; second, to make invisible things visible; and, third, to make inanimate objects move.*"

In addition to its proven ability to entertain, the animated film can also educate. It can show the inside of something a live-action camera can't penetrate; it can characterize with dramatic imagery such abstractions as the struggle between reason and emotion; and it can demonstrate principles through graphic and compelling analogies.

CARTOON CHARACTERS

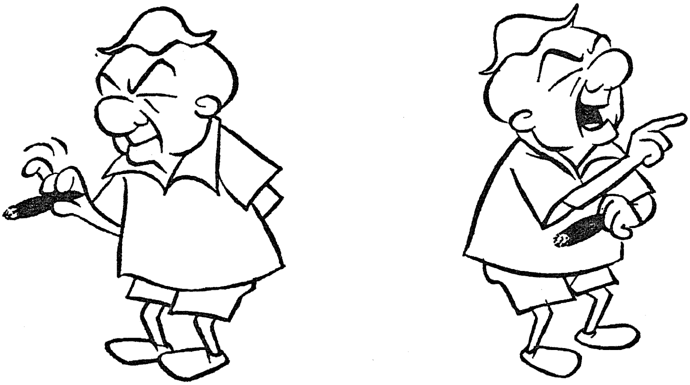
Most animated-cartoon characters are motivated by a single dominant character trait. Literally they are the physical embodiment of that trait. In this respect they are direct descendants of the characters in the morality plays who symbolized such abstractions as Faith, Hope, Charity, Truth, Vanity and Greed. In an identical fashion six of the dwarfs in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* were named after their character traits: Happy, Grumpy, Sleepy, Sneezy, Bashful and

Dopey. UPA Pictures' Mr. Magoo goes under the full title of The Nearsighted Mr. Magoo (his particular character tag, or disability, if you wish), and much of the humor of these films grows out of this characteristic.

Characters in live-action films must change as a result of the trials and tribulations they are forced to undergo in the course of their story. In writing courses this is described as character growth, and no character who hopes to pass muster as good fictional material can be lacking in this dramatic seed. A dramatic play is always involved with a crisis and the main character either sees the light or is destroyed, depending on how he reacts to the crisis. This is not true of cartoon characters. They are like the characters in fables, fairy tales and picaresque novels: They are good, or they are bad, they are lovable rogues, and no matter what adventures or problems befall them, they emerge as they entered: the good are good, the bad are bad and the lovable rogues are as lovable as ever. It was succinctly summed up by Popeye the Sailor: "I yam what I yam and thass all I yam."

The early cartoon characters (1911–1920) such as Krazy Kat, Felix the Cat, Koko the Clown and Colonel Heeza Liar were based on comic-strip conceptions. The simple stories were usually developed around a situation that would lead into a gag chase. The gags were a mixture of broad slapstick embroidered with visual puns: Felix is in a tough spot; he doesn't know what to do. A question mark appears over his head. He looks up, sees the question mark, takes hold of it and straightens it out into a club which he then uses to beat off his adversary.

The coming of sound in 1928 opened a new world of story and character possibilities for the animated cartoon. Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse who starred in the first sound cartoon was not essentially different from characters such as Felix the Cat except that he was a mouse and he could talk. Donald Duck,



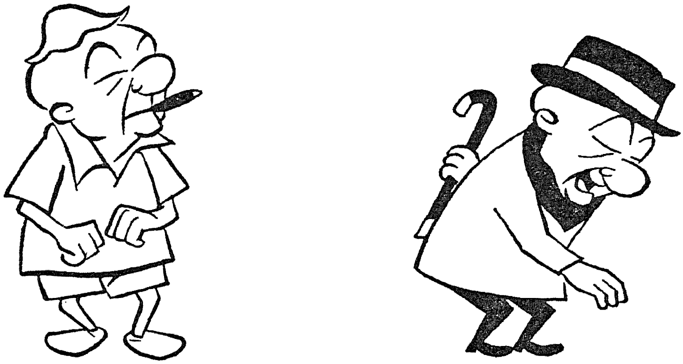
Publicity clips of the

however, was a character created by sound: it was his violent temper expressed in his raucous voice that brought him to life. Disney's seemingly limitless invention of characters and his delightful adaptations of fables and fairy tales carried him to the top of the animated-cartoon field. For the next twenty years, observed Marya Mannes, "animation had meant Disney or imitators of Disney. The comic cartoon had meant big-eared mice, irate ducks, trembling fawns, slavering wolves, and buck-toothed rabbits. In Disney's hands they were delightful, funny, touching, or all three. In the hands of his imitators they became merely raucous and vulgar."

THE ANIMATOR AS STORY TELLER

Walt Disney's great success in animated cartoons was due not so much to his talent as an artist-animator but to his talent as a story teller. He raised the level of the animated cartoon from an amusing novelty to what may be considered the most creative form of film making.

As a story teller with ideas to convey Disney made greater and greater demands on his animators. He wasn't content that objects moved smoothly: they must come alive, they must be believable, and they must convey an idea as skillfully as any

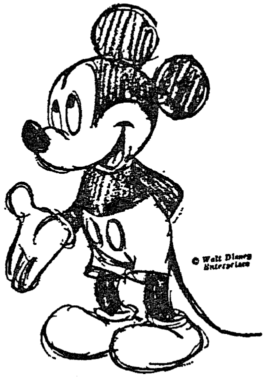


nearsighted Mr. Magoo. UPA Pictures.

actor. As animation became more skillful and grew more sure of itself, more complex ideas could be developed and more interesting stories could be told. Although the contributions made by the skillful draftsmen and animators should not be minimized, the amazing technical growth of the animated cartoon as a flexible means of expression must be attributed directly to the demands made on it by the story tellers. From the early Mickey Mouse adventures to the full-length animated features such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Fantasia, Pinocchio, Bambi, Dumbo* and *Cinderella,* the entire development of the animated cartoon has been the result of a fertile imagination making continually greater demands on a technique, forcing its growth to meet the story teller's requirements.

ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY

One of the major problems of a cartoon film maker is to establish and sustain credibility. The audience must believe that the animated figures, whether they are conventional or stylized cartoons of people or animals, inanimate objects, or abstract shapes and colors, are alive. And not only alive but so believably alive that they can touch the emotions of an audience.



© Walt Disney Enterprises

Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse.

Animated-cartoon characters operate within a frame of logic that is uniquely their own. For example, a character may momentarily defy the laws of gravitation, but this magic suspension works only as long as the character is unaware of what he is doing; the instant he is conscious of being suspended in space, he falls.

There are many ways of infusing life into animated forms. The simple act of animating them, of making them move, gives them the appearance of being alive. But the appearance of being alive is not enough. The audience must be convinced that the moving object is not only capable of movement but is also capable of acting and reacting, of thinking and feeling.

Walt Disney believed that the best way to achieve this kind of credibility was, wherever possible, to copy nature as realistically as skilled draftsmanship and animation technique would allow. Backgrounds were fully rendered in an approximation of the three-dimensional chiaroscuro of the eighteenth-century water-color paintings; human figures and human action as well as animal figures and animal action were rotoscoped in an effort to transcend the limitations of animated movement. I suppose the ultimate achievement in this direction would be to create a drawn figure that duplicated reality as accurately as the wax figures in Madame Tussaud's Museum, and yet after the first startling take at a wax figure you have to admit that there is nothing that looks so real and yet so lifeless.

Another approach, the first distinct break with the conventional cartoon style so highly developed by Disney, was created by a group of predominantly ex-Disney artists who banded together to form UPA Pictures. Under the leadership of Stephen Bosustow, Robert Cannon, Dave Hilberman and John Hubley they found subjects and ideas which they felt had to be conveyed in a contemporary manner. Then they began to experiment, making animated cartoons which utilized the forms and styles created by contemporary painters, sculptors and cartoonists. They felt that a drawing that left something to the imagination, that accepted the fact of its being a drawing rather than a literal copy of reality, had a greater chance of achieving a life of its own.

In contrast to the Disney style, the UPA characters are drawn in a clean, simple line that is used frankly as line and not as something that encloses a solid form. The UPA backgrounds are made up of designed shapes painted as flat areas; color is used not only as a design element but for its emotive qualities as well. The animation action is reduced to an essence, to a stylized simplicity which purposely restricts the range of movement and allows even a very small gesture to assume great importance. A good deal of freedom is gained by working within these restricted conventions: chairs and doors can be popped into a scene when they are needed and popped off when they are not needed.

Style and content influence one another. As the UPA style began to evolve it provided new techniques of story telling and started a search for new story material. Within this new form it was possible to tell stories about human beings, about concepts and about products, with wit and irreverence. UPA could tell with conviction the story of Gerald McBoing Boing, the little boy who could talk only in sound effects, and the story of Christopher Crumpet who, when he didn't get what he wanted, turned himself into a chicken. Because of this new latitude in style UPA could produce James Thurber's fable of *The Unicorn in the Garden* in Thurber's style of drawing; it produced *Madeline* in the Bemelmans' style, and Poe's *The Tell-tale Heart* in a macabre style dictated by the requirement of that particular story.

BUT WHAT MAKES THEM MOVE?

The answer to what makes an animated cartoon move can be found in the elementary principle that caused you to see movement when you flipped the pages of one of those little cartoon books that presented a hootchy-kootchy dancer in action. If you had examined the drawings on the individual pages you would have noticed that there was a slight change in the action of the character from page to page throughout the book. As the pages were flipped in rapid succession, the eye, as the result of a phenomenon called the persistence of vision, retained the image of the character on one page while it was being replaced by the image of the character on the following page, receiving the illusion of a continuous flow of movement instead of a series of rapidly changing still pictures.

AN OUTLINE OF ANIMATION PRODUCTION

After a story for an animated cartoon is worked out in storyboard form and is ready to be put into production it is moved into the director's room.

The job of an animated-cartoon director is essentially that of coordinating story, animation, layout and music into a finished picture. The director discusses and sometimes acts out the action of the entire picture with his animators and guides them in their interpretation of the various scenes as well as in their development of character personality. He designates the music and sound effects to be used and supervises the staging and editing.

A further development of the story is carried out by the designer–layout artist working with the director. Together they break down the story into scenes. The layout artist then sets the style of the pictorial design for the picture. He plans the complete staging, indicating the pattern of animated action in the scenes, character sizes, camera angles and color schemes.

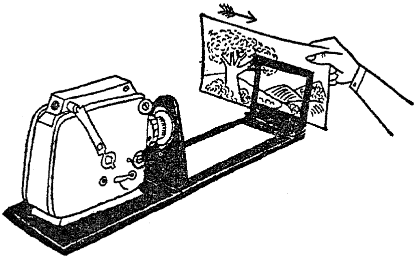
At this stage of the picture's development the director and the musician discuss the musical score. If it is to be a musical production the music must be written and recorded before animation is started; if the music is incidental it is written and recorded later.

Dialogue must always be recorded before any animation involving dialogue can be done. A reading is then made from the dialogue track, breaking the words into syllables and transcribing them on the animator's exposure sheets. These exposure sheets match the film frame for frame; they carry the notations regarding the dialogue accents and emphasis; and they indicate the musical tempo to which the scene will be played.

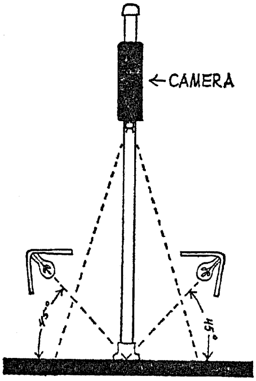
After the director has timed the story, and the layout artist has completed the pencil layouts providing the staging, the picture goes into animation.

Broadly speaking, animation implies the complete manufacture of animated cartoons. More often, the word animation is used to designate the manipulation of a series of drawings in such a way that a sensation of movement is created.

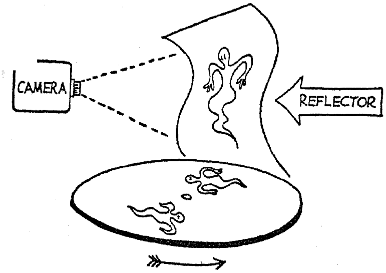
The animator is responsible for the execution of all drawings that create this sensation of movement. He first visualizes the action of his characters in a series of rough key drawings, indicating only those phases of the action indispensable to the telling of his story. His main concern at this stage is the



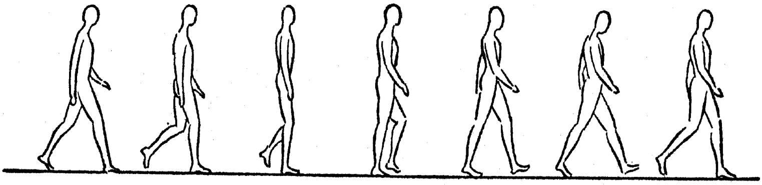
If you wish to insert scenes from still shots or postcards you can get movement in them by placing them in your titler and slowly move them across field of the camera. This will create illusion of camera panning across scene.



Best setup for photographing animation effects is one in which camera is placed vertically on upright bracket. This allows camera to move up and down to change size of camera fields. The title boards on which drawings and titles are photographed will be placed horizontally on flat surface directly below the camera. An old enlarger can be easily made into such a unit. Set up two lights as shown and it's all ready.

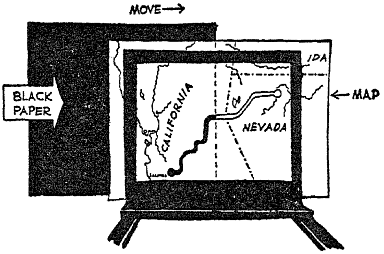


Method of conjuring up ghosts. Make drawing of ghosts on a large circular card to revolve on a horizontal bed. A bent ferrotype tin reflects ghostly weavings when platter turns.

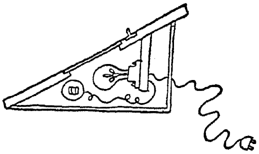


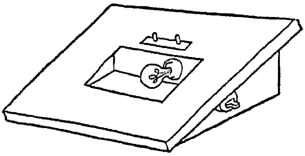
Here is cycle of human walk. Compare this movement

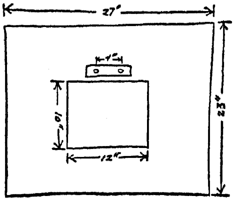
Simple animation effect of moving line showing route of trip can be made by cutting 1/16-inch slit in road map. Slowly slide sheet of black paper behind open slit as camera is running. Sketch by Salkin shows how it is done.



Sketch shows how you can build animation board. Brass pegs are used to register drawings. Your animation paper (10½ x 12½ white bond) must be punched to fit snugly over pegs. Light under glass opening permits visual check through several sheets of animation drawings.

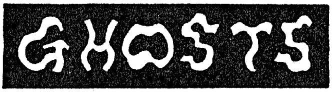






Two drawings create a shivering title. Paint word you want to vibrate with wavering line using opaque white on celluloid. Register second sheet over it and paint same word; where one line zigs, make it zag on second sheet. Film cels alternately on a black background.

1.



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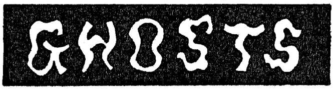
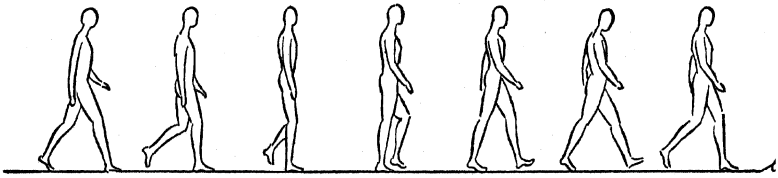




with the exaggerated action shown in the cartoon walk.

feeling to be sustained, the plan of action and the timing of the various movements. His assistant supplies the necessary number of rough drawings to complete the action.

These drawings are photographed, and a reel of these roughs is studied by the animator and the director. This is pretty much like a visual rehearsal and makes possible early changes in presentation and emphasis.

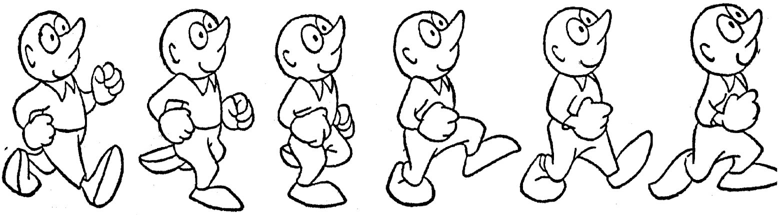
The animator then takes these roughs and strengthens and refines the key drawings, adding any important details which may have been omitted. His assistant completes the scenes and prepares them for inking and painting.

The inking and painting department traces the pencil animation drawings on sheets of transparent celluloid with ink. The cels are the same size as the animation paper and punched with identical peg holes for exact registration. The inked cels are then painted with opaque colors.

In the meantime the pencil background layouts are checked for registration against the animation drawings and then sent to the background painting department, where they are painted in full color.

After the inked and painted scenes are checked against the painted backgrounds they move into the camera department.

The animation camera is a motion-picture camera mounted in a vertical position on a supporting stand allowing it to move up and down as well as to move in an east, west, north, or

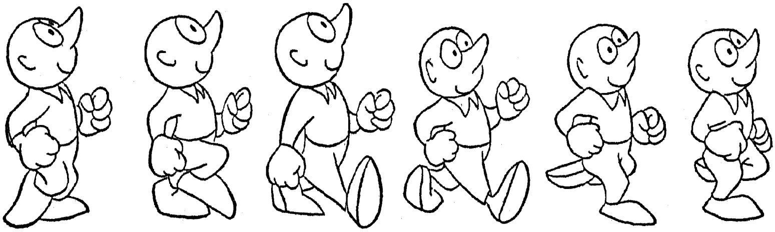


Here is a "pan" walk in which steps are repeated in continuous cycle.

south direction. It is equipped with a stop-motion mechanism making it possible to expose one frame of motion-picture film at a time. The table directly below the lens on which the animation cels and finished backgrounds are placed in position to be photographed contains the standard registry pegs. The pegs are built on a calibrated movable track to make possible the accurate movement of panorama backgrounds.

In live-action photography a pan shot is created by a camera mounted on a movable base. A figure walking in a pan shot would appear to remain in a relatively fixed position on the screen while the backgrounds glide by across the camera field behind the figure. To produce the same illusion in the animated-cartoon process the figure is animated in a walk, but instead of progressing across the screen, the figure remains in a specified area, while his feet are moving in a repeating cycle. The animation camera and the drawings of the walking figure are set in a stationary position but the background is moved behind the figure frame by frame at a speed to synchronize with the animated walk. The foot action and the movement of the background must be carefully synchronized; an error in timing between the character action and the pan movement will result in the character's sliding rather than walking along the background.

The sequence in which the drawings are to be photographed is charted on the animator's exposure sheets. He also



On the screen the figure remains centered, the background moves.

indicates camera trucks and field sizes, as well as background moves.

While the animation is being photographed, the music is recorded. Then the animation-action reel, the sound-effects track, the dialogue track and the music track are all dubbed onto one master negative. From this the composite answer prints are made.

HOW TO CREATE ANIMATED EFFECTS

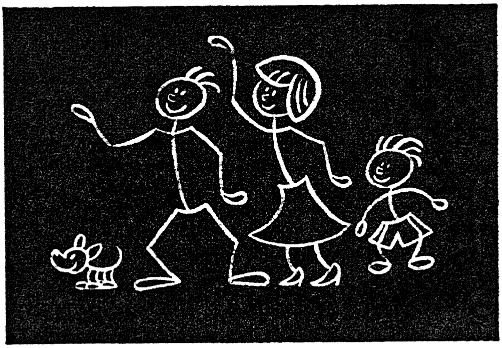
In addition to its value as a story-telling medium, the movie maker will find many other uses for animation. Animated titles are novel, and they add bounce and fun to your movies. Animated effects give life to such inanimate inserts as maps, diagrams and still photographs.

A camera equipped with a stop-motion mechanism or single-frame release is necessary for any kind of accurate animation work. However, this limitation should not discourage you, since many animation effects can be quite successfully achieved with any movie camera.

With the camera unloaded practice flicking the exposure lever to see how few frames you can expose per flick. When you get so you can hit about the same number consistently—and the fewer the better—you're ready to go into production.

Animation drawings are drawn with black lines on white paper. By photographing the drawings on negative stock, rather than on reversal film, you can get white lines on a black background. This will eliminate the objectionable glare of a large white area on the screen.

Animation drawings should be simple. Superfluous detail must be omitted. One extra button on a costume means that if there are a hundred drawings the button must be drawn one hundred times. The use of a kind of skeleton-type cartoon



Simple skeleton cartoon figures can be very easily handled in animation.

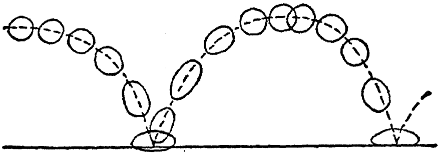
figure will simplify both the problem of drawing and of animation.

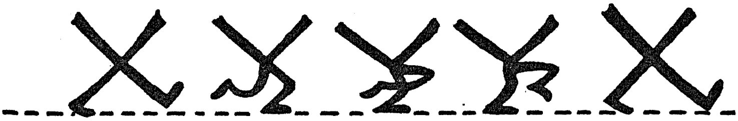
Animation timing is based on the ratio between the size of an object and the distance it moves from frame to frame. For instance, an object occupying a 4-inch area moving at ¼ inch per frame would move quite slowly across the screen; but a small object occupying an area of $\frac{1}{16}$ inch moving at that same ¼ inch per frame would move across the screen at a very rapid rate of speed.

For a picture that will have sync-sound or dialogue time your animation on the basis of 24 frames per second; for silent films use a camera speed of 16 frames per second.

When photographing animated material in stop-motion each change of movement may be exposed for either one or two frames. An object or series of drawings photographed at two frames per move would animate at half the speed on the screen as an object moved the same amount of space between exposures but photographed at one frame per move. If the distance between moves is great expose each move for only one frame. Widely spaced action that is shot on twos appears jerky on the screen. But if the action is closely spaced shooting two frames per move will slow it down and give added smoothness. It also saves animation work since it requires only half as many moves.

The drawing of the bouncing ball illustrates some of the basic timing and mechanics of animated movement. As the ball descends it moves faster—increased spacing—than it does at the peak of its bounce. As it hits the ground the ball squashes, rebounds into an elongated egg shape, and finally resumes its normal roundness again as it reaches its peak. Note that the movement of the ball follows a definite path of action as indicated by the dotted line. This pattern of action establishes the underlying rhythm and directness necessary in all animated movement.





For variation on the X-marks-my-room postcard, get postcard photograph of your hotel and animate an X walking up the building to your room.

One of the simplest forms of animation is moving a dotted line on a map to indicate a route of travel. When using a map insert it is a good idea to make a simple tracing of the map showing only the important names and lines of demarcation. If the map is too large for your titler you can copy it photographically or have a photostat made to the required size. Get a light print to establish contrast to the dark animating line.

Start the heavy black line at your point of departure. Make an exposure, add a dot to the line, make another exposure, then another dot, and so on, until the line reaches its destination.

If the map is large enough you could place a toy automobile on it and move it frame by frame instead of animating the line.

Shoot the map sequence in its entirety and then splice it up and insert it into your reel as a bridge between the scenes shot in various locations.

APPENDIX II / Dance films: story telling in movement

> *Ballet is a particular type of entertainment which demands themes of a quite special nature in which dancing enters forcibly, imperiously and is used to express the theme. A play translated into mime and accompanied by a divertissement is not a ballet.*
>
> —THEOPHILE GAUTIER

> *Dance is broad in scope and the motion picture is wide in its range; the two may certainly meet on more than one premise for more than one function, and meet to the advantage of both.*
>
> —WALTER TERRY

Although dance, like the animated cartoon, is a highly specialized field, there is much that a film maker interested in telling stories through movement can learn from it. Like the animated cartoon, dance—especially the classical ballet—has drawn on fables and fairy tales such as *Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, The Red Shoes, The Nutcracker Suite,* and *Tyl Eulenspiegel* for its stories. Charles Weidman has translated some of James Thurber's *Fables for Our Time* into dance. Martha Graham, the great contemporary choreographer-dancer, has gone into such diverse sources as Russian folklore, American chronicles and Greek legends for ideas for her dance dramas.

Dance is not only the oldest of the arts, but also one of the earliest forms of story telling. It is deeply rooted in ritual: whether used to invoke the Gods or to provoke man's pleasure. The dancer uses his body as the instrument through which he communicates ideas and emotions.

Motion has been called the language of emotions; it has a vocabulary made up of all the movements and poses of which the human body is capable.

John Cranko, writing on *Making a Ballet,* says: "There are two great ways of conveying meaning in movement. Firstly, the 'deaf and dumb' school; that is, stereotyped signs which have prearranged meanings. Thus it is possible in nineteenth-century mime to indicate 'mother,' 'but,' 'I shall die' or what you will, assuming always that the audience has the key to the code.

"Although this method can have great beauty . . . I do not approve of it and always use the second, which is a more kinaesthetic expression of the dancer's feeling: for instance, the way a small child wrinkles his nose in anticipation of something delicious, the way a pompous man will rock to and fro on heels and toes, or the comic dilemma of a fat woman running bumpily, arms clutching her body, to catch a bus. These kinds of movement, allied to self-explanatory relationships with people or objects, convey a situation to an audience without the help of the hated programme note."

A ballet, whether a classical ballet or a modern choreodrama, is a story conveyed through movement, and it is a story which can be told or retold effectively by a movie camera. In working out the story for his ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas,* Cranko decided to make a series of images from traditional fairy stories to be linked together by a thread of plot. He worked out a sort of shooting script of the whole ballet, almost as if he were planning a silent film. For example:

Belle Rose enters sadly and looks offstage to see if she is alone.
She dances her loneliness.
She sees a vision of a prince dressed in green. (Slow music to allow for smoke to spread, then quickening when she sees prince.)
The prince vanishes.

MOVEMENT AND MEANING

The cinematographer can learn much about movement and gesture from a dancer or choreographer. A dancer or choreographer develops a theme rhythmically in space and movement. Many of these movements start with commonly used and universally understood gestures; these gestures are then abstracted, stylized and set to a musical tempo. The dancer is continually searching his emotions and imagination for original forms, avoiding as much as possible obvious and meaningless movement.

The dancer interprets and clarifies human character and behavior through characteristic movement, gesture and posture. Such a study of articulate movement should prove invaluable to a film maker who must also reveal character and communicate ideas through moving images.

APPENDIX III / Adding sound to films

> *In art every technical innovation is an inspiration.... The instrument must precede the artistic purpose it awakens.*
>
> *For if the sound film will merely speak, make music and imitate sounds as the theatre has already done for some thousands of years, then even at the peak of its technical perfection it will remain nothing but a copying device. But in art only that counts for a discovery which discovers, reveals something hitherto hidden from our eyes —or ears.*
>
> —BÉLA BALÁZS

Sound, like color, light and movement, is a tool which the film maker can utilize to aid in conveying story, character, mood. Just as the camera acts as an extension of the eye of the story teller, so the microphone becomes an extension of his ear.

All sounds are not equally important, but the microphone, like the camera, has no sense of selectivity; it records what it hears. Too many sounds at equal volume heard simultaneously produce an earsplitting cacophony. Sound used skillfully is the result of understanding the relationship of music, dialogue, narration and sound effects to the story.

The affective quality of sound on the emotions of an audience is well known. Sound produces not only an emotional reaction, but a physical reaction as well. The sudden unexpected sound of a shot or a scream causes us to jump. An insistent rhythmic beat compels our feet to tap in tempo. Conditioned as we are to the "Hup-two-three-four" of a march, we respond to its martial air and emotionally fall in line. Old familiar tunes bring on nostalgia, and otherwise sensible people get maudlin when an orchestra plays "their song."

Music and sound gives the audience a cue as to what they may expect and how they should respond to what they are about to see. A mysterioso theme will make the audience apprehensive, while a light frothy piece of music tells them that what they are about to see is all in fun.

Narration, dialogue, music and sound effects used with imagination and taste add a new dimension to film. But if dialogue and narration are used excessively they slow a picture down. If dialogue and narration are allowed to dominate the story, relegating the pictures to the secondary role of illustrating the word, the result at best is an illustrated story rather than a story told in pictures; at worst it results in talky tedium unrelieved by a series of pedestrian pictures.

ADDING SOUND TO YOUR MOVIES

If there is no need for accurate synchronization of sound and picture, the problem of supplying sound for home movies is easily resolved by the use of a phonograph. You select an appropriate group of records pertinent to the mood of the film and play them as background. If you want to be able to *segue* from one selection to another, to bring in an occasional sound effect or a bit of narration, then you'll have to use either a dual turntable or a magnetic tape recorder.

In recent years a number of relatively inexpensive systems for approximating synchronous sound for 8mm and 16mm films have been developed. Although accurate lip synchronization with these new systems is not impossible, it is difficult, and there is nothing more annoying than watching a film that is slightly out of sync. The optical sound track used by professional film makers to obtain accurate lip synchronization is still too expensive to be used to any great degree by amateur film makers.

The amateur as well as the semiprofessional working on a limited budget would be well advised to confine his sound to spoken commentary, voice-over narration, background music and sound effects. It's worth noting that amateurs as well as professionals working within these limitations have produced many excellent films.

Here is a brief run-down on some of these newer methods for adding sound to your movies.

MAGNETIC STRIPING

After your film is shot, processed, and edited, you send it to a laboratory for magnetic striping. After the magnetic stripe has been applied to the film it can be run through an integrated projector like the Bell & Howell Filmosound 302. This type of projector has a built in recording mechanism which lets you record your own sound track on any 16mm film. I've seen advertisements for a similar recorder-projector for 8mm. Narration, sound effects and background music can be added easily with this type of setup. As the film is projected, the narration is spoken into the mike. In case of a bad take you can back up the film, erase the sound, edit it or change the entire sound track as often as necessary.

ELECTROMECHANICAL UNIT

This is an accessory synchronizer used to synchronize the speed of the projector to the speed of the tape recorder. The only one I know about at the time of writing is the Paillard-Bolex Synchromat designed to work with the Bolex M8 or M8R projector. This electromechanical device is inserted between the projector and the tape recorder, and it makes the rate at which the film is projected depend on the speed at which the magnetic tape is driven. As it regulates the speed of the projector it ensures synchronization with the sound track.

ELECTRONIC SYNCHRONIZER

This is another method of making a hookup between an ordinary silent projector and a regular magnetic tape recorder. Here is how the Bauer sound coupler for the Bauer T-10 8mm projector works.

The projector, tape recorder and coupler are connected. The silent movie is projected and the narration or commentary is read into the recorder mike. At the completion of the recording the film and tape are rewound to the starting positions. To play back, the electronic synchronizer automatically starts the tape machine at the proper point.

By regulating the amount of voltage flowing to the projector the electronic synchronizer automatically controls the speed of the projector and keeps the picture synchronized with the tape recorder.

SELF-SYNCHRONIZING TAPE

If you already have a silent 8mm or 16mm projector and a magnetic tape recorder, the Revere Synchro-Tape provides an inexpensive method for adding sound to your films. There is no mechanical or electrical connection between projector and tape recorder; all that's required is a rheostat-controlled speed on the projector.

Each package of Revere Synchro-Tape contains a small reflector. The back of the tape is marked with closely spaced vertical lines. To synchronize the projector with the tape recorder you place the recorder directly in front of the projector and below the area of the light beam. The tape is placed on the recorder in the regular manner. Then the small reflector is slipped over the lens barrel so that part of the light from the projector is reflected down to shine on the back of the tape.

Next a small hole is made in the film leader. When this hole is in front of the shutter it will project a small light on the screen. The starting point on the tape can be marked with a small piece of white adhesive.

To synchronize the projector with the recorder, first start the projector. The moment the light from the hole in the leader flashes on the screen, turn on the recorder. The light reflected from the projector illuminates the moving vertical lines on the back of the tape and produces a stroboscopic effect. The speed of the projector is then adjusted until the lines appear to stand still. This indicates that the projector and recorder are operating at the same speed; the speed of projection is approximately 18 frames per second.

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APPENDIX V / "Fair and Warmer"
A screenplay in shooting-script form

This is a simple script intended for the home-movie maker who would like to plunge right in to shooting a film from a scenario.

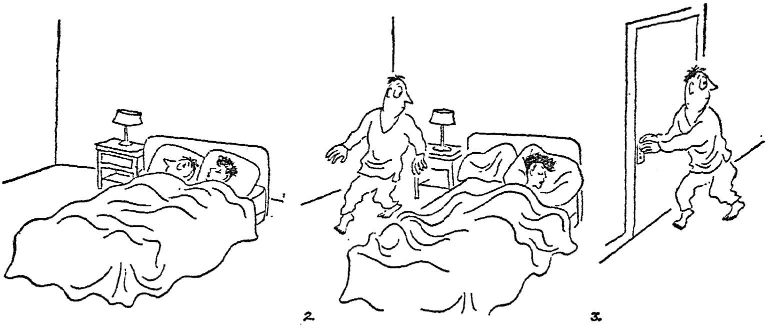
The story takes an old gag as a premise: whenever you wash the car, it will rain. Father in the story agrees with that premise, Mother disagrees. This provides a small crisis. Around this simple situation we develop a series of gag incidents.

The script can be shot as is, or it can be used as a starting point from which to develop new twists and additional business.

Within the frame of the continuity you will find as a matter of record that you have shots of the street on which you live, the exterior as well as the interior of your home, shots of your car, shots of Mother, shots of Father, shots of Junior.

FADE IN
MAIN TITLE: FAIR AND WARMER
PRODUCER'S TITLE: Produced by ....
CREDIT TITLE: Screenplay by ....
CAST: Father ....
Mother ....
Junior ....
FADE OUT
FADE IN
SUBTITLE: EARLY SUNDAY MORNING
FADE OUT
FADE IN

Scene 1: Long shot. Exterior of front of house. Newsboy, on a bicycle, tosses paper on porch as he rides through scene.



Scene 2: Long shot. Interior of bedroom. Father and Mother asleep. Father begins to stir.

Scene 3: Medium shot of Father opening his eyes, yawning.

Scene 4: Close-up of Father looking cautiously to see if Mother is still asleep.

Scene 5: Close-up of Mother sleeping.

Scene 6: Medium shot of Father gingerly getting out of bed and tiptoeing out of bedroom.

Scene 7: Close shot. Exterior, front porch. Father's hand picks up Sunday paper.

Scene 8: Full-figure shot. Interior of living room. Father settles down in a comfortable chair and is just about to start reading the comic section when he makes a take and quickly looks toward the bedroom. Quick cut to—

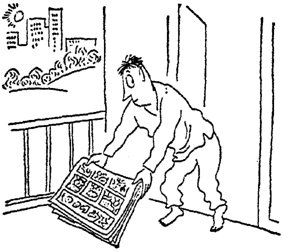
Scene 9: Medium shot. Bedroom. Mother still in bed, calls out:

TITLE: "I WANT THE COMICS!"

Scene 10: (Same as scene 9) As Mother finishes speaking she props up the pillows for a backrest.

Scene 11: Medium shot. Living room. Father looking toward bedroom, smiles wryly, shakes his head as if to say, You just can't win. He gets up and starts toward bedroom with paper.

Scene 12: Medium shot. Bedroom. Mother luxuriating in comfort as she awaits the papers. Father enters, and with a weak smile hands over the papers to Mother. She kisses him



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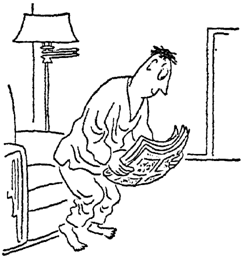

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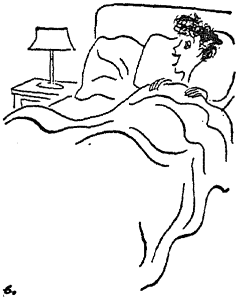

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lightly, then settles down even more comfortably and begins to read. Father shrugs, and exits.

Scene 13: Medium shot. Father in kitchen, fills coffee pot and puts it on stove.

Scene 14: Close shot of Father looking around furtively. He unbuttons button on shirt, reaches inside shirt and brings out the sports section of the newspaper. He smiles triumphantly.

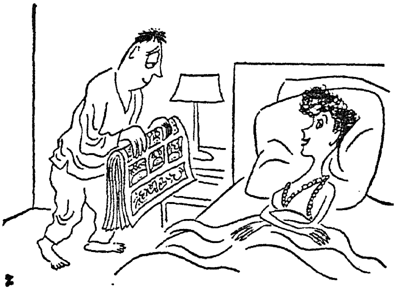
Scene 15: Full shot of Father walking into living room. He settles down in comfortable chair and begins reading.

Scene 16: Close-up of Father reading the paper. Mother's hand comes in over the top of the paper, gives him a cup of steaming hot coffee. Father inhales the fragrant aroma. He looks up at Mother fondly; she's a wonderful woman after all. He takes a sip of coffee and goes back to reading the paper.

Scene 17: Full shot. Junior's bedroom. He is sitting on edge of bed putting on his shoes. He gets up, yawns, stretches, walks over to window, pulls back the drapes and looks out as the sunshine floods in.

Scene 18: Close-up of Father sipping coffee and reading paper. Mother's hand again comes in over the top of the paper, this time holding a can of auto polish right in front of Father's face. Father takes it.

Scene 19: Insert close-up of label on can reading: AUTO POLISH.



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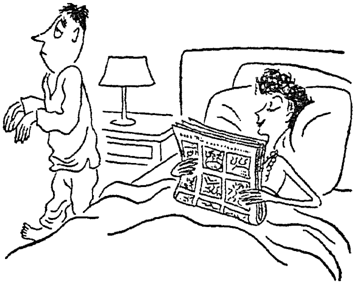

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Scene 20: Medium shot of Father pushing can of polish away, shakes head: no—nothing doing, begins to speak.

TITLE: "THIS IS SUNDAY—A DAY OF REST!"

Scene 21: (Same as scene 20) Father finishes speaking, folds arms adamantly.

Scene 22: Medium shot revealing Junior with Mother. They are both pleading with Father to polish the car. Father is shaking his head "no" and then stops to speak:

TITLE: ". . . AND BESIDES, AS SOON AS YOU POLISH THE CAR, IT STARTS TO RAIN."

Scene 23: (Same as scene 22) Father finishes speaking.

Scene 24: Medium shot of Mother, who has been holding a section of the newspaper behind her back, as though in anticipation of Father's comment about the rain. She places the newspaper on Father's lap and Mother and Junior both point to a particular item.

Scene 25: Insert close-up of newspaper weather report reading: TODAY: FAIR AND WARMER.

Scene 26: Close shot of Father tossing paper aside. He assumes his man-of-science manner as he starts to speak.

TITLE: "IT IS A SCIENTIFIC FACT, WHICH SCIENCE REFUSES TO ADMIT, THAT WHENEVER YOU WASH YOUR CAR, IT RAINS."

Scene 27: (Same as scene 26) Father finishes speaking.

Scene 28: Full-figure shot of Junior at living-room window. He pulls curtain aside as Mother leads Father over to the window. They all look out.

Scene 29: Close-up of Mother, Father, and Junior looking out of the window and up toward the sky.

Scene 30: Extreme long shot of the sky. Camera slowly pans across sky revealing a bright sun and not a cloud in sight.

Scene 31: Close-up of Mother, Father, and Junior. Their line of sight drops from sky to driveway beside house.

Scene 32: Full shot of the car looking very dirty.

Scene 33: Medium shot of Mother and Junior as they look away from the car, then imploringly at Father. He tries to ignore their look. He looks away, then glances back at them. They continue to implore him with their stare.

Scene 34: Close-up of Father. He is weakening, but he puts on his most profound expression as he speaks.

TITLE: "I TELL YOU IT'S AN ABSOLUTELY SCIENTIFIC FACT THAT . . ."

Scene 35: (Same as scene 34) Father continues to propound his theory with great conviction, as we cross-dissolve to—

Scene 36: Exterior of garage. Full-figure shot of Father and Junior coming out of garage. Junior, all smiles, is carrying a small sponge. Father is loaded up to the ears with paraphernalia for washing and polishing the car. (You can gag the shot by loading Father with everything imaginable: 50 feet of garden hose coiled around his arm, a kitchen stepladder, chamois skins, rags, bottles of polish, cans of cleaning solutions, brushes, brooms, and anything else you can think of.) Camera pans with Father and Junior over to the car which is parked in the driveway. Father begins unloading the gear beside the car.

Scene 37: Medium shot of Father as he takes another look at the sky.

Scene 38: Extreme long shot of sky. Sun is shining brightly, not a cloud in sight.

Scene 39: (Same as scene 37) Father looks down, notices Junior has been watching him.

Scene 40: Medium close two-shot of Father and Junior. Junior is laughing as Father starts to speak.

TITLE: "A SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLE IS A SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLE—YOU'LL SEE."

Scene 41: (Same as scene 40) Father finishes speaking as Junior laughs and goes to work dusting off one of the fenders. Father shrugs his shoulders, picks up a dust cloth and starts in.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Scene 42: Long shot showing the side of the car. Father is standing on tiptoe on top of the kitchen ladder trying to wipe top of car. Junior is standing on the ground trying to wipe a part of the top of the hood which he can't reach.

Scene 43: Medium shot of Junior looking around for something to stand on, sees stepladder, looks up and sees that Father is lying on his stomach on top of the car. His feet are clear of the ladder and dangling over the side as he works.

Scene 44: Medium close shot of Junior moving stepladder out from under Father and over to where he can use it. There is a bucket of water in his way so Junior inadvertently shoves the bucket directly below Father.

Scene 45: Full-figure shot of Father, who has just finished wiping the top of the car. He starts sliding down over the side of the car, expecting the ladder to be there. He continues to slide down, back to the camera, and both feet land in the bucket of water with a splash.

Scene 46: Close-up on back of Father's head. He turns around in a slow burn, looks down at the bucket of water. Camera pans down to his feet in the water. He steps out and shakes the water off them.

Scene 47: Medium shot of Junior on the stepladder wiping the hood. Father walks into scene, looks at ladder, then stands there glaring at Junior.

Scene 48: Close two-shot at Junior looks up from his work, sees Dad, and, completely oblivious of what has just happened, kids Dad by holding his hand out as if expecting rain and begins to speak.

TITLE: "NOT A DROP OF MOISTURE IN SIGHT."

Scene 49: (Same as scene 48) As Junior finishes speaking, Father gives Junior a weak smile, then looks down toward his feet. Camera pans down to close shot of Father's shoes dripping water.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Scene 50: Medium shot of Father applying polish to rear fender. He pauses, looks at sky.

Scene 51: Extreme long shot of clear, cloudless sky.

Scene 52: Medium shot of Father, continues with his polishing.

Scene 53: Medium shot of Junior inside the car dusting off the seat. He reaches in between the seat cushion and the backrest, feels around, pauses, makes a pleased take, pulls his hand out and looks down at it.

Scene 54: Close-up of Junior's hand with a nickel in it.

Scene 55: Medium shot of Junior leaning out car window, taps Father who is working close by and shows him the nickel he found.

Scene 56: Close two-shot of Father and Junior. Father congratulates Junior on his good luck, then both go back to work.

Scene 57: Close shot of Junior inside the car, reaches in behind the seat again, feels around, makes another happy take as he pulls hand out.

Scene 58: Close-up of Junior's hand, holding a dime he has found.

Scene 59: Medium shot of Junior showing the dime to Father.

He is a little surprised at the repeat of Junior's good fortune but acknowledges it and they both go back to work.

Scene 60: Close shot of Junior putting his hand back of the seats, feeling around, pausing, making a bigger take as he withdraws hand holding a quarter.

Scene 61: Medium shot of Junior showing it to Father.

Scene 62: Close-up of Father looking at quarter, looks up suspiciously at Junior, back at quarter.

Scene 63: Full-figure shot of Father lifting Junior out of car and getting in himself.

Scene 64: Medium shot of Father shoving his hand down between the seats and feeling around.

Scene 65: Medium shot of Junior on the outside of car looking in.

Scene 66: Close-up of Father's face reacting as his hand gropes about between the seats. A mild take on Father, who stops dead still for a moment, then an expression of mild revulsion appears on his face as he looks slowly down toward his hand.

Scene 67: Close-up of Father's hand with a big wad of chewing gum stuck between all the fingers.

Scene 68: Medium shot of Junior and Father looking at Father's hand. Father with an expression of utter disgust climbs out of the car and stalks off to the house.

Scene 69: Close-up of Junior watching him go off. Then he turns toward camera with puzzled expression.

Scene 70: Medium shot of Junior getting back into the car.

Scene 71: Close shot of Junior reaching down between seats again, feels around, nothing, tries a couple of different areas, nothing. Suddenly a big happy take as he pulls out hand with a dollar bill in it. In his joyous excitement he turns and starts to yell out the good news to Father, hesitates a moment, thinks better not to do it. He puts the money in his pocket and goes back to work.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Scene 72: Medium long shot from high camera angle of car. It is almost completely polished. One door is open at a right angle to car and Father and Junior are working on either side of it.

Scene 73: Medium shot of side of car from normal eye level. Junior is on the window-crank side of the door, washing and wiping the window. He is using a glass cleaner in a spray-type bottle which we see him applying in the beginning of the scene. Father is on the other side of the door, polishing it. They both finish their particular areas and change places.

Scene 74: Close shot of Junior bending down to pick up bottle of glass cleaner to apply to his side of window.

Scene 75: Close shot of father lowering the window so he can polish along the window frame without dirtying the clean window glass.

Scene 76: Medium two-shot of Father polishing the window frame while Junior raises up with the bottle of window cleaner. Unaware that Father has lowered the window, Junior starts spraying what he thinks is the glass. The solution goes right through and hits Father smack in the face.

Scene 77: Close-up of Father so startled he can't move. He just stands there staring at Junior while the solution runs down his face.

Scene 78: Close shot of Junior with a completely bewildered look. He reaches over to feel where the glass is, or was. It's gone all right. He smiles a sickly sweet smile at Father and begins to speak.

TITLE: "... NO GLASS."

Scene 79: (Same as scene 78) Junior finishes speaking.

Scene 80: Close-up of Father as he begins to speak.

TITLE: "THAT'S RIGHT, JUNIOR—NO GLASS."

Scene 81: (Same as 80) Father finishes speaking.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Scene 82: Long shot of Father and Junior as they finish polishing the car. Mother enters scene and expresses satisfaction with the fine job they've done.

Scene 83: Medium shot of Father with arms around Mother and Junior. He is proud and expansive over the excellent job they've done—now that it's finished.

Scene 84: Close-up of Father broadly beaming when—plink! A drop of rain hits him on the forehead. Very cautiously he feels the wet spot on his head, looks at his hand, then looks up at the sky. He makes a big take, then an enigmatic smile appears on his face.

Scene 85: Close-up of Mother and Junior staring at sky.

Scene 86: Extreme long shot of sky. Dark ominous clouds are swiftly gathering, blotting out the sun. (Shoot this scene on a cloudy day. By shooting the clouds stop-motion with fairly long intervals between exposures you can make the clouds look as if they are racing to get together to break into a storm.)

Scene 87: Another shot of sky. A flash of lightning.

Scene 88: Medium shot of Father, Mother, and Junior. The rain is pouring down on them. Father stands there supremely happy with this verification of his scientific theory. Mother and Junior stare somewhat incredulously at Father, at the heavens, at the car, and at Father again.

Scene 89: Close shots of rain hitting and splattering all over the beautifully polished car.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Scene 90: Medium long shot. Interior, living room. Everything looks warm and cozy. Father, shoes off, is stretched out on the couch in solid comfort. Junior is at the bookshelves looking for a book. Mother is in an armchair glancing at the newspaper. Father is extremely content with himself.

Scene 91: Close-up of Father, as he addresses Mother and Junior.

TITLE: "IT'S A SCIENTIFIC FACT . . . ARRIVED AT BY AN EMPIRIC METHOD, PERHAPS . . . BUT VERIFIED BY NATURE EVERYTIME. IT NEVER FAILS.

Scene 92: (Same as scene 91) He finishes speaking.

Scene 93: Close shot of Junior looking at Father with a new kind of admiration. He turns back to a copy of the encyclopedia he is reading.

Scene 94: Insert close-up of page. Visible chapter heading reads: THE STORY OF RAIN: WHAT IT IS, WHERE IT COMES FROM.

Scene 95: Full shot of Mother getting out of her chair a little too casually. She walks out of scene with newspaper.

Scene 96: Exterior, back door. Medium shot of door opening. Mother's hand is seen tossing newspaper out onto a bundle of old newspapers in the rain.

Scene 97: Close shot of newspaper as it misses bundle and lands on the ground in a puddle of rainwater.

Scene 98: Insert close-up of weather forecast on newspaper: TODAY: FAIR AND WARMER. Rain is pouring down on it.

FADE OUT

TITLE: THE END.

INDEX

Actors, 126, 128–132
  children as, 206–210
Algar, James, 216
Alice in Wonderland, 16
Animated cartoon, 85, 87, 92, 215–230
  effects, 224–231
Arnold, John, 159–160
Art, 1, 3, 32, 115
Audience, and comedy, 77, 81
  and directors, 121–122
  interest of, 50–52, 57–63, 106, 138
  relationship with, 13, 16

Background (*see* Locale)
Balázs, Béla, 174, 175
Beauty and the Beast, 38
Benchley, Robert, 65
Billings, Josh, 65
Birth of a Nation, 9, 42–43
Bosustow, Stephen, 221
Brackett, Charles, 61–62

Camera, 4–5, 55, 135–150
  angle, 19–22, 110, 142–143
  animation, 224, 226–228
  gadgets, 145–147, 150, 153
  movement, 143–145
  speed, 23, 144–145
Caniff, Milton, 60–61
Capp, Al, 61, 65
Capra, Frank, 127–128
Chaplin, Charles, 65, 78, 118, 121–122
Children as actors, 206–210
Climax, 44–45, 48–49
Clurman, Harold, 126
Cocteau, Jean, 38, 115
Comedy, 35, 64–82, 92, 123, 144
  improvisation, 78–80
  plotting, 77–80
  satire, 81–82
  types, 72
Complications (*see* Plot)
Composition, experiments with, 107, 109
  lighting and, 161–163
  in movement, 141–145
  of shots, 19–22, 103, 104
  of stills, 109–110
  storyboard technique, 85, 86, 93, 95, 96
Conflict as story basis, 43–50, 57–63, 77
Connell, Will, 87
Cranko, John, 232, 233
Creative process, 6, 28, 31–32, 38–39, 65, 93–94, 115
Crisis, 44, 48–49
Cutting (*see* Editing)

Dance films, 231–233
Director, 43, 78, 95, 117–133, 222, 223
Disney, Walt, 7, 38, 51, 52, 185, 217–221
Drawing in movie making, 85–100

Eastman Kodak Company, 17, 113, 204
Editing, 8–9, 22–23, 37, 42, 111, 124, 170–187
  cross-cutting, 177
  cut-away, 177
  cutting on action, 176
  flashback, 179
  intercut, 178–179
  pace, 181
  shots, selection of, 180–181
  silhouettes in, 180–181
  storyboard, 85–100
  straight cut, 175
  time indicated by, 182–184
Effects, special, 145–150
Eisenstein, Sergei M., 128–129
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 29
Exposure, 17

Fables and fairy tales, 38
"Film Notes, Part 1, The Silent Film," 42
Forster, E. M., 31–32
Fotofade kit, 148

Gags, 74–75, 78–80, 92, 106
Griffith, D. W., 9, 42–43, 172–173
Gulliver's Travels, 81

Hamlet, 70
Hodgson, Lena, 211–213
How Children Can Be Creative, 210, 213
Humor, 13, 33, 65–66, 72, 80–82
  jokes, telling of, 53–54
  (*See also* Comedy; Gags)

I Am a Camera, 126
Ideas, 3, 5, 16
  in behavior patterns, 32–33
  from book titles, 35–36
  from books, 24
  in direction, 122, 124
  in environment, 32–33, 190–205
  from magazines, 34
  from movie advertisements, 34–35
  from movie titles, 35
  from newspapers, 34
  for pictures, 105
  in production, 138–139
  for stories, 27–39, 44–45, 50, 190–213
  storyboard technique, 85, 86, 92–96, 98, 99

Ideas, from themes, 37, 47, 94, 123, 126
  from visual stimulus, 37
Images, 25, 42, 135–138, 140–141, 150
Interest, center of, 19
  and conflict, 57–63
  of movie maker, 9–11
  in pictures, 105, 106, 138, 141, 142

Jacobs, Lewis, 173
Jones, Henry Arthur, 34

Kant, Immanuel, 66
Kazan, Elia, 122, 131
Kramer, Stanley, 95
Krazy Kat, 217

Lawrence, D. H., 25
Legends, 38
Lens, 9, 10, 17, 135–137, 147–149, 155
Light, 153–163
  and composition, 19
  control of, 154–156
  experiment with, 107–109
  and exposure, 17
  and filters, 148–149
  functions of, 153–154, 159–160
  in storyboard technique, 97, 99
Lighting, basic positions, 156–158
  bounce, 158–159
  mood, 159–160
Li'l Abner, 61, 65
Lindgren, Ernest, 171–172, 181–182
Locale, movie, 20–21, 78–79, 110, 123, 195–205

Make-up, 163–168
Mannes, Marya, 218
Melies, George, 14
Menzies, William Cameron, 87
Mickey Mouse, 217–218
Mr. Magoo, 217–219
Montage, 173–174
Mood, 62
  lighting for, 159–160
Movement, 14, 18–20, 104, 141–145, 160–163
  dance, 232–233
Museum of Modern Art, The, Bulletin of, 42
Myths, 38

Nature's Half Acre, 7

Olivier, Laurence, 70
Open City, 43

Paisan, 43
Partch, Virgil, 75

Pencils, drawing, 99–100
Photography, still, 106–113, 141, 149, 150
  time-lapse, 7, 135
Pictures, 103–113, 138
  storyboard, 85–100, 124
Plot, 43–50, 57–63
  comic, 77–79
Point of view, comic, 66–71, 81–82
  in story telling, 142
Premise, 36, 47, 53–54, 94, 123, 202–203
Pre-production design (*see* Storyboard)
Pudovkin, V. I., 173, 174

Robin Hood, 38
Rosselini, Roberto, 43
Rosten, Leo, 120

Sappy Homiens, 88–91
Satire, 81–82
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 66
Screenplay, 55, 111–112, 118, 120, 124–127, 129–130
Scripts (*see* Screenplay)
Seldes, Gilbert, 215
Sennett, Mack, 79–80
Sequences, filming of, 18, 19, 92, 111, 144
Shakespeare, William, 70
Shaw, George Bernard, 71, 130, 132
Sight and Sound, 211
Situation (*see* Plot)
Sketches, storyboard, 85–100, 124
  sixteen-loop figure, 96–99
Sound, 217, 234–238
Special effects, 145–150
Stein, Gertrude, 31
Sternad, Rudolph, 95
Steve Canyon, 60
Stewart, Donald Ogden, 65
Still photography, 106–113, 141, 149, 150
Stories, sources for, 27–39, 44, 50, 92–96, 190–213
  babies, 191
  children, 207–209
  Christmas, 193–194
  games, 197
  hobbies, 195–197
  jobs, 195
  mothers, 209–210
  movie letters, 202–205
  movie portraits, 197–202
  sports, 197
  vacations, 192–193
Storyboard, 43, 85–100, 111, 124, 222
Suspense, story, 43–50, 57–63
Symbolism in movies, 139–140

Theme in story telling, 33, 37, 47, 53–54, 94, 123, 126, 186, 202–203

Thurber, James, 66, 193, 222, 232
Titles, 23, 107, 146–147, 184–185
Tomkins Telepad, 99

UPA Pictures, Incorporated, 88, 221–222

Video Sketch Pad, 99
Viewpoint (*see* Point of view)

Walpole, Horace, 67
Walt Disney Studio, 87, 99
Wilder, Billy, 61–62
Williams, Tennessee, 59
Winchell, Walter, 31
Wingert, 13
Winsten, Archer, 62

Zinnemann, Fred, 131

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leo Salkin's dreams of a career when he was a boy centered around being a cartoonist, a photographer, and a writer—and he became all three plus many more. In Los Angeles he studied art, design, and photography. This training led to five and a half years as an animator and gag man on "Oswald the Rabbit" at Universal Studios and another five years as writer at the Walt Disney Studios. Mr. Salkin then worked as a story director at Columbia and MGM cartoon studios. During the war he spent three years in the Navy in visual education, writing, directing, photographing, and editing training films. Back in civilian life he went to work as a free-lance magazine cartoonist, advertising artist, photographer, and writer. Then, after dabbling in television, Mr. Salkin spent another four years at the Disney studio, where among other things he wrote the Academy Award nominee "Pigs Is Pigs" and worked on the screen story of "Lady and the Tramp." For the past three years he has worked for UPA Pictures as a writer-director and as executive producer of the UPA subsidiary in London. Among his best-known work as a writer and director are "The Whale Who Wanted to Be a Submarine," which was presented on *Omnibus*, and "Sappy Homiens," which he wrote, narrated, and directed for The American Cancer Society. With his wife and ten-year-old daughter, Mr. Salkin is living in Hollywood.

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